

A RIGHTEOUS STRUGGLE

[A Chronicle of the Ahmedabad Textile Labourers'
Fight for Justice]

MAHADEV HARIBHAI DESAI



NAVAJIVAN PUBLISHING HOUSE
AHMEDABAD

BY GANDHIJI
TOWARDS NON-VIOLENT
SOCIALISM

This is a comprehensive collection of Gandhiji's writings on what he chose to call non-violent socialism — a state of society in which "even as members of the individual body are equal, so are members of society." The book is divided into eleven sections covering subjects like capital and labour, equal distribution, minimum wage, strikes, communism, plantation labour and *kisans*, etc. and the moral requisites for bringing into existence such a non-violent social order.

Pages xii, 165

Price Rs 2
Postage as. 10



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Fight for Justice]

BY
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NAVAJIVAN PUBLISHING HOUSE
AHMEDABAD

First edition, 3,000 copies, October, 1951
One Rupee Eight Annas

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Printed and Published by Jivanji Dahyabhai Desai
Navajivan Press, Ahmedabad 9

EDITOR'S NOTE

This is not a word for word rendering of the Gujarati original. The English translation has been liberally revised and edited to make it compact and readable. The revising and editing had to be done in a hurry.

The book deals with an epoch-making event which took place in Ahmedabad in 1918 under Gandhiji's leadership and guidance. He was then quite new to public work in India. The labour movement at that time was still in its infancy, if it existed at all. Gandhiji laid its foundations on the twin principles of truth and non-violence. Till then such principles were never applied to industrial disputes in India or in any other part of the world. The struggle was conducted on a high moral and spiritual plane. Ten thousand workers were kept under discipline and carried on their fight to a successful end in an exemplary and peaceful manner. The Labour Organization in Ahmedabad, whose foundations were thus laid by Gandhiji, has since then successfully stood the test of many an industrial storm, and has been the wonder and admiration of many, including visitors from the West.

In chapter I of this book the late Mahadev Desai, Gandhiji's secretary, gives an introductory account of the struggle and of Gandhiji's speeches at the meetings of labourers, and of the leaflets he issued to guide them. Chapter II contains the leaflets them-

selves, and constitutes the most important part of the book. It will prove to be an authoritative guide to all those who are eager that the relationship between Capital and Labour should be established on a moral and spiritual basis. Its value is enhanced by the fact that it is so eminently practical and was written to direct from day to day a movement which confronted Gandhiji with urgent problems.

As there are two accounts of the Struggle and Leaflets included in this book, one by Mahadev Desai in chapter I and the other by Gandhiji in appendix D, and then the contents of the leaflets themselves, the reader will find a certain amount of repetition which, however, is unavoidable under the circumstances.

September, 1951

BHARATAN KUMARAPPA

PREFACE TO THE SECOND GUJARATI EDITION

I am happy to find that this small book is going into a second edition. When the struggle of the Ahmedabad Textile Workers commenced no one knew what the final outcome would be. Every one congratulated the resolute workers but soon forgot all about it. But to-day there is a demand for the history of that struggle in different languages. Then, there were few to befriend the fighters, to-day there are many who are ready to support the cause of labour. It is no exaggeration to say that the foundation for this was laid by that struggle for justice.

The Textile Labour Association of Ahmedabad has come to be a unique institution in India, as a result of that struggle. I may even say that the institution has a unique place in the world, since hardly any other Union has achieved what it has, by keeping non-violence and truth in the forefront. The workers then fought for a slight increase in wages and succeeded. But to-day their goal is to secure co-ownership of the mills on a footing of equality with the so-called owners. Labour is as much wealth as Capital, nay it is even more valuable. A Textile mill can, therefore, belong only jointly to both these owners of wealth. In 1918, through their struggle for justice the workers began to realize the worth of their own wealth. They have not yet attained strength enough to secure co-ownership, but they are fast acquiring it. When they attain that strength, the "owners" will not force them to strike, but will of

their own accord embrace them as brothers and make them partners. Non-violence yields such extraordinary fruits. This, however, calls for patience, restraint, discipline, unity and faith in the organization. Ahmedabad workers possess all these qualities. May they achieve their goal through these qualities. If they are able to do so, they will have justified the lead given them by Shrimati. Anasuyabehn, Shri Shankerlalbhai and Shri Gulzarilal, who did not have any other ambition than to help the workers attain their proper status.

June, 1940

MAHADEV DESAI

CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
	EDITOR'S NOTE	iii
	PREFACE TO THE SECOND GUJARATI EDITION	v
I	THE WORKERS' STRUGGLE	3
II	LEAFLETS ISSUED DURING THE STRUG- GLE	38
	APPENDIX A — STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE WORKERS	71
	„ B — STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE MILLOWNERS	83
	„ C — THE ARBITRATOR'S DECI- SION	90
	„ D — GANDHIJI'S EXPLANA- TION REGARDING THE STRUGGLE AND HIS FAST	92

A RIGHTEOUS STRUGGLE

I

THE WORKERS' STRUGGLE

The prayers, recited every morning and evening by the members of the Satyagraha Ashram of Gandhiji, consist chiefly of verses and devotional songs which express his goal in life. It is Gandhiji's aim that his Ashramites should imbibe the true meaning of these verses and songs, and in course of time give expression to these high ideals in all their acts. These days Gandhiji's own activities are summarized in the daily repeated verse, * meaning 'I desire the abolition of the pain of all those creatures who are distressed', and the beloved song of the Ashram "*Vaishnava jana* . . . He is a true *Vaishnava* (devotee of God) who realizes the distress of others." **

These two quotations are as deeply impressive as they are simple. There is no ego or pride in them; they merely express an intense desire that every activity may flow only in one desired channel, viz. that of service. It is for this reason that the true *Satyagrahi* treats them as tenets for correct behaviour. He does not go out in search of an opportunity for Satyagraha out of ego or pride; he automatically comes across it. A *Satyagrahi* cannot help undertaking the struggle. Gandhiji did not go in search of Champaran, Champaran drew him to itself. He did

* कामये दुःखतप्तानाम् प्राणिनामर्तिनाशनम् ।

** वैष्णव जन तो तेने कहिअे जे पीड पराअी जाणे रे ।

not of his own accord involve himself in the peasants' fight at Kheda, it was thrust on him.

Similarly, Gandhiji took up the Ahmedabad Mill Labourers' struggle also at the desire of others. When he went to Bombay on 2nd February, 1918, in connection with the Kheda situation, he happened to meet Sheth Ambalal Sarabhai there. Ambalalbhai showed him some papers and informed him that it was feared that the workers would strike as a result of discontent over the question of bonus. He pleaded that undesirable consequences would result from such a strike and that Gandhiji should intervene. Gandhiji felt that Ambalalbhai's apprehensions were justified, and so he decided to take measures to prevent developments which might endanger the peace of the city of Ahmedabad.

He went to Ahmedabad and began inquiring into the case of the workers and the mill-agents. He found that since August of the previous year the weavers were being paid quite satisfactory "plague bonuses". He also discovered that many weavers who would have left Ahmedabad due to plague had been tempted by these plague bonuses to continue to work in the mills at the risk of their lives. He found that in some cases the plague bonus was as high as 70 to 80 per cent of the workers' wages, and that the bonus had continued to be given even after the cessation of plague, since prices of food-grains, cloth and other necessities of life had risen to more than twice, thrice, or four times the old prices.

The workers of the weaving department were agitated on learning that the millowners contemplated stopping the bonus abruptly. Daily they went to Shrimati Anasuyabehn and explained to her their

condition. They demanded that they should be paid at least a 50 per cent increase as Dearness Allowance instead of the plague bonus.

After coming to Ahmedabad, Gandhiji began to discuss the matter with prominent mill-agents. They too showed a keen desire to settle the matter. Gandhiji had not decided hitherto to intervene directly in the dispute. But the situation was becoming more and more serious day by day. The Government kept itself fully informed of developments, and on the 11th the sympathetic Collector addressed to Gandhiji the following letter :

“There is likelihood of a serious situation arising between the millowners and the workers on the question of bonus. The millowners threaten to lock-out the workers, which will naturally cause great distress and hardship. I am, therefore, very anxious to understand the real situation. I am informed that the millowners will, if at all, heed only your advice; you are also sympathetic to them, and you are the only person who can explain their case to me. I shall be thankful, therefore, if you can make it convenient to meet me for about an hour to-morrow.”

Gandhiji saw the Collector, the workers and the mill-agents and held discussions with them. Ultimately both the parties decided to settle the matter by arbitration. In the Arbitration Board, Sheth Ambalalbai, Sheth Jagabhai Dalpatbhai and Sheth Chandulal were appointed by the millowners, and Gandhiji, Shri Vallabhbhai Patel and Shri Shankerlal Banker were appointed on behalf of the workers, with the Collector as the umpire.

Gandhiji had to go to Kheda soon after this. The situation there too was serious. He had started his inquiry there and was engrossed in that work when he was informed by Shrimati Anasuyabehn that the

situation in Ahmedabad was critical and the mill-owners were on the point of declaring a simultaneous lock-out in all the mills. Gandhiji reached Ahmedabad. He was informed that workers in a few mills had struck work. He realized that the step taken by those workers after the appointment of arbitrators was improper. He at once expressed his regret to the millowners for what had happened, and informed them that the workers were ready to rectify their mistake. It must be stated here that it was not as if the millowners were free from all blame. But Gandhiji concerned himself only with the mistake committed by his own side and showed his readiness to correct it. The millowners would not agree. They insisted that since the workers resorted to a strike after the appointment of arbitrators, the arbitration stood cancelled *ipso facto*. They contended that since they were no longer bound by arbitration, they would dismiss all the workers who were not willing to work with a twenty per cent increase. Gandhiji exerted himself to the utmost to avert this situation but the millowners were adamant and refused to budge an inch.

Gandhiji met the workers very frequently thereafter. He held discussions with Shrimati Anasuyabehn, Shri Shankerlal Banker and others possessing knowledge about the condition of the mill-workers, and their wages. He studied the scales of wages at Ahmedabad and Bombay, the demand of the workers, the financial position of the mills, the commission that the millowners charged before the war and after, and whether considering the increased cost of manufacture of cloth after the war, the industry could bear the burden of the increase demanded.

On the basis of this study he came to the conclusion that the workers should not demand more than 35 per cent. He decided to inform the workers about this in order that they might keep their demands within restraint. But before doing so, he thought it well to tell the millowners about it and requested them to give him their detailed opinion and help. The millowners were unable to assist in any way, and referred irrelevantly to the fact that the Government and the millowners in Bombay had given only a slight increase. They thus evaded the issue regarding what they should pay in the then prevailing circumstances. Gandhiji and his colleagues had no alternative but to advise the workers to demand a 35 per cent increase. Those workers, who had demanded a 50 per cent increase till now after much persuasion finally accepted their advisers' recommendation to be content with 35 per cent.

An element of doggedness already characterized both the sides. Seeds of unity and strength were sown when the warpers formed their own union. The millowners also established an association of their own to combat the unity of labour. Not only the whole city of Ahmedabad but the whole of Gujarat and to some extent the whole country was watching this struggle, which continued for about 25 days with great zest but without any bitterness. Let us examine the main issues of this struggle and understand their real significance.

Ever since the day workers accepted the advice of their friends and entrusted their problems to them, Gandhiji put a restraint on their tendency for horse-play, diverted their bubbling enthusiasm along useful lines and tried to give the struggle a religious turn.

He decided to enter into the life of the workers, since superficial advice without intimate knowledge of the outer and inner life of the workers was likely to fail ; even if it did not entirely fail, its success would be insignificant. The following means were, therefore, adopted for this purpose :

(1) To visit the workers' houses, make detailed inquiries regarding their mode of life, try and remove any defects noticed therein, advise and help the workers in their difficulties, and share their happiness and misery to the extent possible.

(2) To advise the workers regarding their conduct during the struggle, whenever they desired such advice.

(3) To enlighten them on the issues and principles involved in the struggle daily at a public meeting for workers to be held at a fixed place.

(4) To issue instructive leaflets everyday with a view to fixing firmly in their minds the principles and significance of the struggle, and to supply them with simple but elevating literature which would conduce to their mental and intellectual development and enable them to leave for posterity a heritage of the means for its progress.

(1) According to this decision, Shri Shankerlal Banker, Shrimati Anasuyabehn and Shri Chhaganlal Gandhi daily visited the workers in their houses. They collected information about the members of the workers' family, their names etc., and family income and expenditure. They thus obtained data which would be useful in suggesting ways of improving their

condition. They talked to and instilled courage into those who were tired of the struggle or feared starvation. They arranged for medical treatment for the sick, and procured employment for those who desired it.

The value of these morning and evening visits was by no means small. They served the purpose of enabling the advisers to feel the pulse of the entire labour community; and, as we shall learn later, Gandhiji knew exactly what steps to take at the critical moments in the struggle, only because of these visits.

(2) In addition to these morning and evening visits by the advisers, the workers were free to go for advise to Anasuyabehn's place at any time during the rest of the day. A number of workers availed themselves of this opportunity and went to Anasuyabehn's house. There was no time fixed for these visits. During the final days of the struggle, they would knock at her door and have it opened even at one or two o'clock at night, and she gave them advice without the least irritation.

(3) & (4) Arrangements for public meetings and distribution of instructive leaflets were made to give general advice to the workers. Every evening they gathered under a *babul* tree on the banks of the Sabarmati, outside Shahpur Gate. Some of them walked from two to four miles to attend the meeting. There they met Gandhiji, Anasuyabehn, Shankerlal and other sympathizers.

Very few except those who attended these meetings know what historic incidents occurred under that *babul* tree. Gandhiji believed in silent work, and took care to prevent coloured reports appearing in the Press about his activities. It is for this reason that those

who obtain their information from newspapers do not know anything about the steps Gandhiji took in Champaran to transform the inner life of the people, and the results he achieved ; people know only about the enquiry he held there. Similarly in Ahmedabad reports of the speeches made by Gandhiji during the struggle of the mill workers were deliberately not supplied to the newspapers. It is, therefore, necessary here to give some portions of those memorable speeches he made and the discourses he gave on the leaflets distributed to the workers. Though the leaflets were published under the name of Anasuyabehn, they were, as a matter of fact, written by Gandhiji himself. The leaflets are given in the next chapter. Here we shall summarize some of his speeches and leaflets.

In the initial days, Gandhiji spoke on the importance of the pledge taken by the workers. The pledge was as follows :

1. Not to resume work until a 35 per cent increase on the July wages is secured.

2. During the period of the lock-out, not to indulge in mischief, quarrelling, robbing, plundering, or abusive language or cause damage to millowners' property, but to behave peacefully.

Every one was asked to take this pledge with God as his witness, and there was not a single soul who did not join in unanimously repeating it.

Referring to the possible distress incidental to the pledge to abstain from work, Gandhiji said :

“To-day is the fifth day of the lock-out. Some of you probably think that everything will be all right after suffering for a week or two. I repeat that even though we may hope that our struggle will end early, we must remain firm if that hope is not realized, and not resume work even if we have to die. Workers have no money, but they

possess a wealth superior to money—they have their hands, their courage and their fear of God. If a time comes when you have to starve, have confidence that we shall eat only after feeding you. We shall not allow you to die of starvation.”

Referring to some workers who complained that a 35 per cent increase was inadequate, Gandhiji said :

“Some workers say that we can demand more than 35 per cent. I say you can demand even a 100 per cent increase. But if you make such a demand, it would be unjust. Be content with what you have demanded in the present circumstances. If you ask for more, it will pain me. We cannot make an unreasonable demand from anybody. I believe that the demand for 35 per cent is just.”

The next day reverting to the same topic he spoke as follows :

“There will be but few who will give you good advice and courage. Many will try to discourage you, and these may include even your friends. There will be many to advise you to accept as much as you can get and be thankful to God for it. This sounds sweet but really it is very bitter advice. We must not admit helplessness except before God. Do not feel helpless even if you have no money, since after all, all of us have hands and feet. We can enjoy our Swaraj only if we use them. We have to be firm in order that we may have good standing with the millowners. In the circumstances in which we are placed, we should tell the millowners that we are not prepared to tolerate so much pressure from them. Whether you seek my advice or that of somebody else, you can succeed without any help from me or anyone else. I and a hundred thousand more cannot bring you success. Your success depends on yourselves, upon your sincerity, upon your faith in God and upon your courage. We are merely your helpers. You have to stand on your own strength. Stand by the pledge you have taken without any writing or speech, and success is yours.”

In the sixth day's leaflet Gandhiji explained that in order to be able to stand by the pledge, it was necessary for one to cultivate the virtues of truth, courage,

justice, sincerity, tolerance, and faith in God. Discouraging on this leaflet he said :

“If you had accepted defeat from the beginning, I would not have come to you, nor would Anasuyabehn ; but you decided to give a fight. The news of your resolve has spread all over India. In course of time, the world will know that Ahmedabad workers have taken a pledge, with God as their witness, that they will not resume work until they achieve a certain objective. In future your children will look at this tree and say that their fathers took a solemn pledge under this tree, with God as their witness. If you do not fulfil that pledge, what will your children think of you ? The future of your posterity depends on you. I urge you to see that no worker gives up the pledge even if someone implores him to do so ; stand by your pledge firmly. You may have to starve to death. Even then you should declare that you have taken the pledge with God as your witness ; you have taken the pledge not because Gandhi wanted you to do so, but you have taken it in the name of God. Stand by your pledge faithfully and continue the struggle. India will then see that you were prepared to be ruined but did not give up your pledge. Commit to memory these leaflets, and keep the pledge conscientiously. It is no use committing them to memory without putting them into practice. Many can repeat parrot-like the Holy Quran or the *Gita* ; they can recite the *Gita* or *Tulsi-Ramayana* also, but committing to memory alone does not suffice. If you commit to memory and act accordingly, rest assured that none can whittle down your 35 per cent even by a quarter.”

The seventh day's leaflet contained some general but pointed expressions as to how the workers should use their idle hours. The struggle may continue for a long time, and some may have to face starvation. They may, therefore, have to do a type of labour they had never done before. Therefore, in order that they may regard all honest work as honourable, Gandhiji said :

“Any occupation that is essential for a man's life can not be considered as either high or low in comparison with

other occupations. One need not be ashamed of working in an occupation other than the one he is used to. We believe that weaving cloth, breaking stones, sawing or splitting wood, or working in the fields are all essential and honourable occupations. The warmth and strength acquired by breaking stones cannot be acquired by handling a pen."

After giving the workers instructions regarding their general behaviour, the eighth day's leaflet was written in order that the workers' faith in their advisers may remain unshaken. In regard to it Gandhiji spoke as follows :

"Hitherto we have discussed the workers' pledge and what the workers are to do. We have now to give you in writing what our pledge is and what we have to do. We shall tell you what you should expect from us. Whenever you see us committing mistakes or slackening in our efforts to carry out our pledge, you can quote our pledge to us and reprimand us."

The following expressions in this leaflet claim our special attention :

"We can never wish or do ill to the employer, and in every action of ours the idea of their good is also always present. We want to secure the good of the workers while safeguarding the good of the employers."

Gandhiji took the opportunity to emphasize to the workers, whenever there was an occasion to do so that the struggle was not to harass the employers but to secure the employers' good, while at the same time securing the welfare of the workers. We shall see later on that every word contained in this leaflet was carried out literally.

The following words formed a part of the advisers' pledge :

"If in this struggle any persons are reduced to starvation and are unable to get work, we shall feed and clothe them before we clothe and feed ourselves."

After this stage, the tone of the leaflets is changed. Hitherto it was felt that the millowners would test the workers for a few days and then take them back to work at the wage demanded by them. The workers were, therefore, asked to have patience when they asked for alternative employment. It was explained to them that their desire for other work would be construed to mean that the workers did not want to return to their employers, and that they harboured hatred towards them. The workers too, unemployed as they were, had been patient and had literally carried out the instruction to remain peaceful. Now, however, it appeared that the non-acceptance of the workers' demand by the employers was not due to their inability to pay 35 per cent, but to sheer obstinacy. They had adopted this perverse attitude fearing that if once the workers succeeded, they would be a source of constant nuisance and the advisers of labour would get a permanent footing.

The fear or delusion behind this perversity has been very well discussed and removed by the leaflet of the ninth day.

“The employers fear that workers will become insolent if they are given what they demand. This apprehension is baseless. The workers may be crushed to-day, but even so it is not impossible that they may become insolent when they get an opportunity. The history of the world shows that wherever workers were suppressed, they revolted. The employers believe that the acceptance of the workers' demand would increase the influence of the advisers on the workers. If, however, the stand of the advisers is correct, and if they persist in the cause, the workers will not give up their advisers, even if they failed. It is of greater importance to bear in mind that the advisers are not going to forsake the workers either. *Those who have voluntarily dedicated themselves to service will not leave their duty*

even if they incur the displeasure of their masters — the workers they serve. The more they are thwarted the more zealous they will be in service. Therefore, however they may try, the employers will not be able to take away the advisers from contact with the workers."

After warning the employers of the lasting nature of the relation between the workers and their advisers, Gandhiji discussed the position of the employers in the next leaflet. This and some of the succeeding leaflets were intended not only for the workers but also for the employers. The aim of this leaflet is to educate not only the workers but also to convert the millowners if possible. He says in it that the relation between servant and master should be based not on the selfish interest of either, but on the welfare of both, not in a spirit of this much work for this much pay, but on mutual goodwill. Gandhiji had published these ideas years ago in the *Indian Opinion* in his article on *Sarvodaya* based on Ruskin's book *Unto This Last*.* The same ideas, having matured in course of time, he discussed in these leaflets in simple, direct and forceful language. Who would not be influenced by the following touching and courteous appeal?

"The organization of employers against workers is like the arraying of elephants against ants. Considering this matter from its moral aspect, the employers should tremble to oppose the workers. Men in India do not appear to have ever in the past accepted the principle that the workers' adversity is the employers' opportunity. We confidently hope that the Jain and Vaishnava employers in this capital city of glorious Gujarat will never consider it their victory

* An English translation of Gandhiji's Gujarati paraphrase is now being published by the Navajivan Press.

if they compelled the workers to surrender or deliberately gave them less than their due."

The next leaflet shows what evil consequences accrue from an unholy alliance based on self-interest. While discussing the matter, Gandhiji referred to the Satyagraha in South Africa and said,

"Just as our workers did not take advantage of the strike by European workers in South Africa and exploit the situation arising out of the difficulties of the Government, but earned a name for themselves by suspending their campaign and helping the Government, similarly if any catastrophe were to befall the millowners the workers should not harass the owners by taking advantage of their difficulty but should run to their help."

Let us examine the effect on the workers of the advice hitherto given to them. When the strike began a feeling of panic prevailed in the city of Ahmedabad. Every one was afraid that the angry workers would cause trouble on thoroughfares, commit thefts, and provoke scuffles, and riots. But as they saw nothing of the sort during those ten days, the public were surprised. The District Collector also expressed to Gandhiji his pleasant surprise at the behaviour of labour and said that he had never seen or heard of such a peaceful struggle. Every day in the evening the workers congregated in large numbers at about 4-30 p.m. under the *babul* tree. They did not hesitate to come from long distances. They read with enthusiasm the leaflets issued from day to day and read them out to their illiterate friends. They cheerfully greeted Gandhiji, Anasuyabehn, Banker and their other advisers. At the evening meetings, they made way for them in the midst of a crowd of thousands. They maintained perfect silence during Gandhiji's discourse and reading of the leaflet. They declared

their pledge at the end of the meeting in such a charming manner that the number of outsiders who came to see these meetings began to increase day by day. Those — old or young — who attended these meetings can never forget them. The output of fresh songs and verses composed for the occasion everyday by the workers, the majority of whom were illiterate, was indeed surprising. Many of them, it may be said, were doggerels, but the sentiments, conviction, determination, and gratitude reflected in these verses were remarkable. Expressions full of passion such as the following by some Muslim operatives did not go without producing considerable effect on the morale of the workers :

“Such unity amongst us as the present has never been accomplished before nor shall ever be achieved. Mahatma Gandhi is a tree whose branches have spread throughout the country. Be firm in your resolve and maintain your prestige and your honour. Never break your unity ; do not even think of doing so. Never sully the honour of those who are our well-wishers. We should not bring discredit to our revered leaders who have befriended us. Do not resume work without the consent of our leader. If he orders us to work without wages, we shall do so. We cannot lose our prestige by doing so. We should obey our leader who has bound himself to us out of sympathy for us.”

In course of time some of the workers' phrases became common parlance and sentences like the following are even now not forgotten : “Be not afraid for we have a divine helper.” “If we are to die of starvation, let us die ; but it is proper that we do not give up our resolve.” These sentiments of the workers showed that what Ruskin terms ‘roots of honour’ and what Gandhiji refers to as ‘roots of truth’ in his *Sarvodaya*, are deeper in these poor people than in others.

Gandhiji took great care to see that while the struggle was thus going on peacefully, no expression was used either deliberately or unknowingly, which could give offence to the other party. Once when a workman-poet in his over-enthusiasm made fun of the machines in the mills in his verses and indulged in ridiculing the millowners, Gandhiji remarked :

“It is not proper that you ridicule the machines and call them “empty show-cases”. These inanimate machines have not done you any harm. You had been getting your wages from these very machines. I must advise our poets that we must not use bitter words; we should not cast aspersions on the employers. It is no use saying that the rich go in motor cars because of us. By saying so we only lose our own self-respect. I might as well say that even the King Emperor George V rules because of us, but saying so does not redound to our credit. We do not prove ourselves good by calling others bad. God above sees who does wrong. He punishes him. Who are we to judge? We merely say that the employers are wrong in not giving us the 35 per cent increase.”

While on one side the movement was going on in this manner, efforts from the other side to stem it were also being made. Without entering into details it may be stated that the employers tried various devices for demoralizing and enticing the workers. Some of the workers on whom this pressure had an immediate effect suffered great mental embarrassment. In order to make such workers determined once more, Gandhiji narrated in his twelfth day's leaflet some anecdotes regarding civil resisters — *Satyagrahis* — in South Africa. Thus the mill workers who had never read about the civil resistance campaign in South Africa were incidentally introduced to the heroes of that struggle. Their exploits

were described in such an effective manner that a thoughtful hearer could never forget them.

In addition to what was stated about Harbatsing, Kachhalia, and Valliyamma in the leaflet Gandhiji said :

“When these three went to jail and opposed the Government, they did not seek to secure anything for themselves. These brothers and sisters did not have to pay any tax. Kachhalia was a big merchant, he did not have to pay any tax. Harbatsing had migrated before the tax was imposed, so he too did not have to pay it. The law regarding taxation was not applied in the place where Valliyamma lived. And yet all these joined the struggle with the rest for the sake of the honour of Indians in South Africa. Your struggle on the other hand is for your own good. It should, therefore, be easier for you to remain firm. May their example strengthen you and make you resolute.”

In the thirteenth day's leaflet a heart-rending description of the difficulties these brave persons underwent was given :

“20,000 workers remained homeless and without wages for nearly three months. Many sold away what little property they had. They left their huts, sold their beds, mattresses and cattle, and joined the march. Hundreds of them walked twenty miles a day for a number of days and sustained themselves on a scanty ration of $\frac{3}{4}$ seer of flour and an ounce of sugar. There were Hindus as well as Muslims among them....In that struggle women who had never worked before went out hawking and worked as washerwomen in the jail. Considering these examples who among you would not be prepared to put up with a slight inconvenience to keep your pledge?”

In this manner the Satyagraha in South Africa was explained to the workers in simple easy language. Indirectly it added to the general knowledge of those who read the leaflet.

Distress among the workers was increasing. Many now became anxious to get some work. Seeing the

hardships of the workers some felt that they should be given financial assistance. Friends suggested collecting a fund for the workers. Some actually offered financial help. But Gandhiji did not countenance all this. His reply to them was as follows.

“What is the meaning of Satyagraha if workers join the struggle thinking that you will give them money for it or support them with your money? The real secret of Satyagraha lies in bearing cheerfully the difficulties that it may entail. The more a Satyagrahi suffers, the more he is tested.”

Workers were daily told in the meetings and elsewhere,

“You have earned money till now by your own effort. Do not, therefore, now ask for financial aid from anybody. It is beneath you to do so; the world will ridicule you by saying that you fought on the strength of others' money.”

The workers also understood this, but many of them had no wherewithal even for food. Such persons were in need of money. Various types of work were found for them. Some went to Sabarmati and worked as common labourers carrying bricks, sand etc., as Gandhiji's Ashram was under construction at that time. In the beginning they hesitated, felt humiliated by this sort of labour, but ultimately they realized that it was honourable to earn one's own bread by honest work.

There was concern in the city over the struggle. Many began to think, “What can be the result of this fight? Neither party gives up its obstinacy.” Many offered to mediate. Some suggested accepting 20 per cent to begin with, adding that the remaining 15 per cent increase will be given soon afterwards. Others suggested that 20 per cent may be added to wages as bonus and 15 per cent should be accepted by the

workers as dearness allowance in the form of grain and foodstuffs. Others again posed, "How can workers have any pledge? They will give up their pledge if you advise them and will accept 20 per cent. If the employers do not yield, the workers should, as otherwise it will bring ruin to the industry." Many such suggestions were made, of which one was from Shri Jivanlal Barrister. Gandhiji wrote to him as follows :

"Dear friend,

Why should you try to persuade me? Why do you even doubt that I would not do what you suggest, if I really could? I cannot afford to be obstinate. The world may think wrongly about me, but you cannot. I am overwhelmed with sympathy. This lock-out is not a joke for me. I am doing all I can. All my activities and actions are motivated by the desire to find a speedy solution. But the millowner friends are prolonging the deadlock. Considering it useless to persuade me, why do you not try to persuade the employers? They do not have to humiliate themselves. It is not proper to humiliate the workers. Be assured that there will be no bitterness left between the educated class and the rich. We definitely do not desire to quarrel with the rich."

On the same day, Gandhiji wrote the following letter to Sheth Mangaldas who had throughout the struggle kept his mills running by giving the workers the same bonus as before and had not joined the mill-owners' group.

"Many friends come to me and try to persuade me that I should somehow bring to an end the struggle between the workers and the millowners. I would terminate the struggle if I could, even at the cost of my life. But there is no scope for such termination. It is in the hands of the employers to bring it to an end. Why make it a point of prestige not to give 35 per cent because the workers have asked for it? Why is it taken for granted that I can get the workers to accept anything I want? I

claim that the workers are under my control due to the means I have adopted. Shall I now adopt measures to break their pledge? If I do so why should they not sever my head from my shoulders? I hear that the employers find fault with me. I am unconcerned. Some day the employers themselves will admit that I was not in the wrong. There can be no bitterness between me and them, since I am not going to be a party to any bitterness. Even bitterness needs encouragement; it won't get any from me. But why don't you participate in this? It does not become you merely to watch this great struggle unconcernedly."

These negotiations however led to no result. Leaflets were issued by the employers' group, just because they felt that they must say something in reply to the leaflets issued by Gandhiji. It is not necessary to give permanence to those leaflets by referring to the untrue and unbecoming statements contained therein. Gandhiji too ignored them. Many attempts were made by them to persuade the workers to resume work and give up their pledge. It was also sought to scare them by the prospect of starvation; they complained about it to their advisers who kept them loyal to their pledge.

Events, however took a new turn on 12th March. Hitherto the millowners had continued the lock-out and there was no question of workers resuming work. The lock-out was ended on the 12th, and it was announced that the mills would be open for all those workers who were prepared to accept an increase of 20 per cent. From that day onwards Gandhiji decided to hold daily meetings in the morning for the simple reason that since the opening time of the mills was in the morning, the weak-hearted or ignorant among the workers may resume work being misled by improper advice. The leaflet, issued on the day

on which the lock-out was ended and the strike by the workers commenced, contained advice not only to the workers but also to the employers.

“In order that the workers may rise from their present condition, there is no alternative for them but to remain firm to their pledge; and it is our conviction that the good of the millowners lies in the workers' keeping their pledge. *Eventually the employers will gain nothing by taking labour from those who cannot abide by their oath.* A religious-minded man will never rejoice in compelling any one to break his pledge nor be a party to causing such a breach.”

Just as all efforts were made by the opposite party to induce the workers to resume work, similarly the workers' party made every attempt to strengthen the workers. A report was brought to Gandhiji that some over-enthusiastic persons among the workers brought pressure to bear on the weaker ones to prevent them from resuming work. Gandhiji could not tolerate this. He had been saying to them, “You should keep up their morale by influencing their heart and their feelings, not by terrorizing them.”

The next day he issued a leaflet full of perfect honesty :

“The success of the workers entirely depends on the justice of their demand and their correct behaviour. If the demand is unfair they cannot succeed. If the demand is just, but the workers in trying to achieve it, use unjust means, speak untruth, mislead or coerce others, or remain idle and thereby experience hardships, even then they will be defeated.”

An unforeseen development, however, occurred partly due to this leaflet and partly due to events happening everyday. This leaflet had an adverse effect on the over-enthusiastic. Many who hoped to be congratulated on their efforts for stopping the workers

from returning to the mills received a shock. Being simple-minded, they were offended at this frank advice. They began to tell the weak ones: "Those who desire to resume work may do so, your way is open, nobody will stop you." Those who were using moral pressure till now began to relax it. As a result of this, many workers were confused in mind. They began to give vent to all sorts of opinions. Shrimati Anasuyabehn, Shri Shankerlal Banker and Shri Chhaganlal Gandhi were already visiting them regularly. Those workers who wanted to earn, came to the Ashram to work and earned wages. But some of them were bad coins. They began to say to themselves, "We are unnecessarily allowing ourselves to be carried away. Nothing will come out of this oath. The pledge is useless. We are facing starvation. We are unable to do any labour. What suffering do those who have only to advise us undergo? We are the ones who suffer."

The millowners too were making their hearts hard. They were becoming more obstinate in their refusal to give 35 per cent, and engaged men to undermine the morale of the workers.

Twenty-two days passed in this manner. Starvation and the secret agents of the millowners were busy doing their work, and the devil whispered in their ears: "There is no God to help the weak in this world and pledges are just a make-believe of those who do not succeed." One day Shri Chhaganlal Gandhi was requesting the workers of the Jugaldas Chawl to attend the morning meeting, when they confronted him with these words: "What is it to Anasuyabehn and Gandhiji? They come and go in their car; they eat sumptuous food, but we are suffering death-agonies;

attending meetings does not prevent starvation." These remarks reached Gandhiji's ears. Generally Gandhiji does not mind criticism, but these bitter words which described the situation realistically pierced his heart. The next morning he went to the meeting. What did he see there? To quote his own words, "I saw a thousand dejected faces with disappointment writ thereon, instead of the five to ten thousand who used to assemble daily, beaming with self-determination." Just before this, he had heard the report about what the people in the Jugaldas Chawl were saying and remarked :

"I felt that the reprimand of the workers was justified. I believe in the Divine order and, therefore, I believe that a man is bound to keep to his oath at whatever cost. I believe in it as firmly as I do that I am writing this letter. I also knew that the man sitting before me were God-fearing persons, but this lock-out, prolonged in an unforeseen manner, had tested them beyond their capacity. I was not unmindful of what I had realized during my widespread travels in India that hundreds of persons take an oath and break it at the very next moment. I also knew that the best among us have just a very feeble and irresolute faith in God. I felt that it was a golden opportunity for me that my faith was being tested. I at once got up and announced to the persons present there: 'I cannot tolerate for a minute that you break your pledge. I shall not take any food nor use a car till you get 35 per cent increase or all of you die in the fight for it.'"

It requires a poet's pen to describe what happened in the meeting when this was announced. Tears flowed from the eyes of every one present in the meeting. They felt that some serious mistake had been committed, that Gandhiji had been shocked by their weakness, and he had decided to expiate for it. In the twinkling of an eye they grasped the situation and standing up one by one they said : "We shall never

fail in our pledge, come what may, even though the heavens fall. We shall not weaken. We shall go to the houses of those who are vacillating and talk to them and will not allow them to weaken. Kindly give up this terrible resolve." They did not limit themselves only to such speeches. By noon, crowds of them gathered at the Ashram, and requested Gandhiji in plaintive words to give up his oath to fast. Some workers asked for work enthusiastically, some promised to work and give their wages to those who did not or could not work. It was a red-letter day for the Ashram. Even Shankerlal Banker, who had never known physical labour, in the heat of the sun carried bricks and sand for three or four days along with the workers, to enthuse them. Anasuyabehn also joined in the work. Men, women and even children in the Ashram participated in this with great enthusiasm. All this had a tremendous effect. The enthusiasm and joy of the workers was unbounded. Those who used to complain and grumble at having to labour and used to sit idle, worked with double vigour and zest.

While this was happening on the one hand, on the other, hundreds of workers, came to Gandhiji with the residents of the Jugaldas Chawl, who had taunted him, to express their regret, and to persuade him to give up his resolve to fast. "We shall not falter even if the strike continues for months. We will give up the mills, do any other work, shall drudge, and even beg but will not break our pledge." All gave such an assurance. Some were so excited that they told Gandhiji that if Anasuyabehn who also had taken an oath to fast at the same meeting, would not withdraw it, they would take some extreme step. One worker

came with a big knife tied to his waist, and threatened to commit suicide. This sweet yet piteous dispute ended in Anasuyabehn having to agree to take food.

The workers' meeting was called in the evening at five o'clock. The leaflet of that day dealt with 'Labour'. It was the first statement of its kind in Gujarati regarding the importance and sanctity of labour. It was direct and straightforward and went to the hearts of the readers.

"If the workers do not work, it would be like sugar giving up its sweetness. If the sea gives up its saltness, whence shall we get salt? If the workers give up working the whole world would perish. Farhad broke stone for Shirin.* For the workers their pledge is their Shirin. Why would workers not break stones for it? For adhering to truth, Harishchandra sold himself; why should workers not suffer hardships for being true to their pledge? Imam Hassan and Hussein suffered terribly for their pledge; why should we not be ready to die to keep our oath?"

In his speech at the meeting Gandhiji said :

"You must have heard what happened this morning. Some were shocked, others wept. I do not feel that there was anything wrong or shameful in the morning's incident. I do not feel angry at the criticism made by the residents of Jugaldas Chawl. I, or others, who want to serve India, have much to learn from it. I have always believed that our penance and capacity to bear suffering with understanding, is bound to be fruitful if it is sincere. You took an oath relying on my advice. In this age the oath has lost its value. Men break their oath at any time and for any reason.

"I am grieved to see this. There is no other tie but an oath to bind the common man. The meaning of an oath is that with God as our witness, we decide to do a particular thing. People who are advanced, or are on a higher plane can

* Reference is to Farhad the lover who is said to have broken a mountain for his beloved Shirin of a Persian poem.

perhaps do without oaths, but we who are on a lower one cannot. We who fall a thousand times cannot lift ourselves without oaths. You will admit that had we not taken the oath and repeated it daily, many of us would have fallen long ago. You yourselves have said that you have never experienced such a peaceful strike. Starvation is the cause of your falling from your oath. I should advise you to keep your oath even if you have to starve. At the same time my co-workers and I have taken an oath that we will not allow you to starve. If we look on unconcernedly while you are starving, you may give up your pledge by all means. There is one more thing I must mention. It is that even as we may not starve you, we may not ask you to beg. If we did so, we would be guilty in the eyes of God and would prove to be thieves. But how can I persuade you to maintain yourselves with manual labour? I can do manual work, I have done it, and would do so even now; but I do not get the opportunity for it. I have a number of things to attend to, and therefore, I am able to do some manual work only as exercise. Will it behove you to tell me that you have worked on looms, but cannot do other physical labour? This superstition has been deep-rooted in India. It is good as a principle that a man should specialize in one type of work only; but it would be improper to use it as a justification for not doing any work whatsoever. I have thought deeply about this. When I came to know of your bitter criticisms of me I felt that if I wanted you to discharge your duty, to show you the worth of an oath and the value of labour, then I must put some concrete proof before you. We are not out to have fun at your cost or to make a show. How can I prove to you that we are prepared to carry out whatever we tell you? I am not God that I can demonstrate to you this thing in any other manner than through a fast. I would demonstrate it to you in such a manner that you would be convinced that with this man we shall have to talk straight, we cannot play with him. Nobody can be made to keep his oath either by inducement or by threat. Love can be the only inducement that can be offered. You must understand that he alone who loves his religion, loves his honour, loves his country, will not give up his resolve."

The situation created by the fast was the subject of such curiosity, criticism and controversy that before saying anything about it, it is well to know what Gandhiji himself said on different occasions on this subject. To quote Gandhiji again,

“It is my habit to take such vows. If I refrain at times from taking them it is only out of fear that people may wrongly imitate me. I have to deal with millions of workers. I have, therefore, to be very careful and examine thoroughly the issues involved before making up my mind to do so. I wanted to show you that I was not playing with you.”

On another occasion he said :

“I have attempted to show you by example that you should value your oath in the same manner as I have done. You have already done one thing. You could have thought, ‘What have we to do with your oath, we cannot continue the fight, we must go back’; but you did not do so. You decided to accept our service. And I estimated your value to be high. I considered it a joy to swim with you or to sink with you.”

Let us now look at the popular controversy over Gandhiji's vow. India had not yet witnessed its leaders making use of vows for the public good. It is, however, Gandhiji's firm belief that vows when taken seriously can save a man from demoralization, and he had frequently put it in practice in South Africa. To the people in India it was entirely a new experiment. Some persons who believed that Gandhiji would not do anything improper were curious. Those who did not have so much faith in him felt that he was desperate and had resorted to this device to coerce the millowners. Prof. Anandshanker Dhruva asked on the very first day : ‘I know that this serious decision must have been taken in conformity with your

life-long principles, but I would like to know why it has been taken." Then followed a discussion on the spiritual implications of vows, which need not be reproduced here.

It would suffice to say that throughout the discussion Prof. Dhruva stressed the view that such a vow to fast may temporarily alter the outward behaviour of the opponent, but will not change his inner attitude. Gandhiji endeavoured hard to explain his viewpoint, but Prof. Anandshanker did not appear to be convinced. The millworkers' struggle which was hitherto of restricted interest assumed wider significance. Since Gandhiji took this serious step even those who till now kept aloof became concerned. Prof. Anandshanker was one such. Leaders outside in different parts of the country also showed great anxiety, and all felt that this dispute should be settled soon.

Nor were the millowners quite unaffected. Undoubtedly many of them believed that it was just a device or desperate step to coerce them. Ambalal-bhai, who had till now by his firm attitude sustained the other employers, was greatly pained by Gandhiji's act. He came and sat by Gandhiji for hours requesting him to give up his fast. On the third day many other employers joined him in this request. All were anxious to persuade Gandhiji to break the fast, but not so anxious to see the pledge of the workers fulfilled. Gandhiji was not unconscious of the fact that the indirect effect of the fast would be coercion of the millowners. He frequently explained this aspect to the employers. In his lectures he repeatedly said that even though the oath is vitiated by its coercive effect on the employers, yet it was primarily undertaken to

demonstrate to the workers what significance he attached to their pledge and thereby to sustain them.

Some millowners told Gandhiji : " We will give 35 per cent increase to workers this time *for your sake.*" Gandhiji flatly turned down the offer and said : " Do not give 35 per cent out of pity for me, but do so to respect the workers' pledge, and to give them justice." On the third evening of the fast he said :

" The millowners came and told me, ' We would give 35 per cent for your sake,' *but it would be to me like a sword-thrust if they gave 35 per cent for my sake.* I knew their intention, but I could not give up the fast, for I thought that I would incur God's curse if I permitted ten thousand men to lower themselves by accepting the increase on that basis. It is extremely humiliating for me that they offer you 35 per cent *for my sake.*"

Discussions continued in this manner and Gandhiji went on fasting. Instead of causing physical weakness, the fast seemed to add to his vigour. Attempts to persuade him to break his fast continued from many directions. We have already seen that Shri Ambalal was greatly shocked at Gandhiji's vow. His efforts, therefore, to dissuade him were equally great. His main argument on the employers' side was : " It will be intolerable if workers defied us frequently counting on the support of outsiders. If this happens, there would be nothing like discipline among them. Besides, it is not proper that everytime there is a dispute between us and the workers we have to accept arbitration by a third party. In that case we shall have no prestige. We will immediately concede 35 per cent if you keep yourself away from them for all time in future, and leave matters between us and the workers entirely to us." This was a very exorbitant demand. It was impossible that Gandhiji,

who always fought at the dictates of his conscience against injustice, moral turpitude and exploitation, would agree to abstain from serving labour for all time. Ambalalbhai's proposal did not, therefore, materialize.

The discussion then took another form. It was argued that the millowners' resolution should be accepted as a matter of principle. "Just as you have taken an oath, so have they," was the plea. Gandhiji showed its incongruity by a counter question. "Is it open to a king to take an oath that he will tax his subjects heavily and harass them by not listening to any of their grievances?"

Even so, Gandhiji was constantly aware of the coercive effect his fast was having on the millowners. He, therefore, prepared himself to accept a compromise giving the workers a 35 per cent increase on the first day to enable them to uphold their pledge, a 20 per cent increase on the second day to honour the employers' resolve, and thereafter an increase to be decided by an arbitrator appointed both by the workers and the millowners. It was realized that the arbitrator could not be expected to settle the dispute on the third day and could not order payment of a definite increase from that day, and therefore, it was agreed that a period of three months should be given for the purpose. What should the workers be paid pending the Award of the arbitrator? Both the parties settled this issue by a compromise. The workers reduced their demand by $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent, the millowners increased their offer by $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent, and it was decided that workers be given an increase of $27\frac{1}{2}$ per cent in the interim period. Prof. Anandshanker who was acceptable to both the parties was appointed as the arbitrator.

It was but proper that the responsibility was placed on Prof. Anandshanker, as he took active interest in the dispute since the day of the fast, and he accepted the responsibility with pleasure.

On the day previous to this settlement Gandhiji wrote to Ambalalbai, 'Respect your sense of justice more than your desire to break my fast. My fast gives me immense pleasure, and therefore need not cause pain to any one.' And addressing the inmates of his Ashram on the morning of the day of the settlement, he said : 'It is inevitable for people to feel that my fast will weigh heavily on the minds of the employers, even in spite of my intentions that it should not. It is true that the millowners have not been able to act freely owing to my weak condition resulting from the fast. It is against the principles of justice to get anything in writing, or lay down conditions, or take anything from a person, under duress. No *satyagrahi* should ever do so. I had therefore to compromise in regard to the settlement, and out of shame yielded partially to the employers.

Workers came to know of the settlement by the following morning and thousands of them collected under the tree outside the Shahpur gate to know how the matter was settled. The Commissioner was invited to the meeting and many other notable persons of the city were also present. Gandhiji arrived at 11 o'clock and explained the facts about the settlement to the workers in the following words :

"The settlement which I place before you merely upholds the prestige of the workers. There is nothing more in it. I pleaded with the millowners all that I could. I asked them to give 35 per cent increase permanently. They felt, however, that it was too much. Our demand too was one-

sided. We had asked them to let us know their view before we began the struggle but they did not tell us. The mill-owners now accept the principle of arbitration. I also say, let the matter be entrusted to arbitration. I will be able to get 35 per cent from the arbitrator. If the arbitrator decides on something less, I will own that we had made a mistake in our demand. The millowners said that they had their resolution to abide by just as you had your pledge. I told them that they could not regard their resolution as a pledge, but they insisted that theirs too was a pledge. I considered the pledges of both. My fast intervened. I could not tell them, "I will break my fast if you give me what I demand." I felt that would be cowardice on my part. I, therefore, agreed that for the present both may maintain their pledges, and finally what the arbitrator decides should prevail. Our settlement, therefore, is shortly this. On the first day 35 per cent increase would be given as per our pledge; on the second day we get 20 per cent as per the millowners' resolution. From the third day till the date of decision by the arbitrator an increase of $27\frac{1}{2}$ per cent will be paid, and then if the arbitrator decides on 35 per cent, the millowners will give us $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent more, and if he decides on 20 per cent we shall refund $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent."

The workers received these words with great acclamation. But besides these joyous tidings, Gandhiji gave them a few words of advice also. He said :

"We have in this struggle counselled together; therefore, do not take an oath hereafter without consulting us. He who has no experience, and has no self-discipline, has no right to take an oath. After twenty years' experience, I believe that I have a right to take a vow. I see that you are not yet qualified. Do not, therefore, take an oath without consulting your elders. If the occasion demands it, believe me that we shall be prepared to die for you then, as we are now. But remember that we shall help you only when you take your vow in consultation with us. An oath taken mistakenly can be broken. You have yet to learn how and when to take an oath."

Gandhiji then pressed the workers to accept with pleasure the offer of the millowners to distribute sweets to the workers as a mark of satisfaction of the employers regarding the settlement. The workers accepted the offer with joy. To show that the settlement was agreeable to them, leaders from different sections of labour expressed their happiness and gratitude by short and appropriate speeches. Gandhiji broke his fast then and there, being urged to do so by the workers and other friends. Mr Pratt, the Commissioner of the Northern Division, could not repress his feelings of joy and made a short speech congratulating both the sides.

“It pleases me very much,” he said, “that there is a settlement between you. I am thoroughly convinced that so long as you follow Gandhi Saheb’s advice and do what he tells you, you will fare well and secure justice. You have to remember that Gandhi Saheb and his associates — both men and women — have suffered much, taken a great deal of trouble and shown love and compassion for you. You should remember that always.”

The same evening all the workers gathered together in the spacious compound of Ambalalbhai’s bungalow and the millowners distributed sweets to them. The speeches by Gandhiji and Ambalalbhai on that occasion show how straightforward was the struggle between the employers and the workers and how amicably the settlement came about. Ambalalbhai in his speech remarked :

“It is a matter of great pleasure to me that the workers have decided to re-open the weaving sheds and resume work after all these twenty-two days. I do not want to say anything more than that if the workers revere Gandhi Saheb, the millowners do no less. On the contrary they revere him even more. I hope that mutual goodwill among us will remain for all time.”

Gandhiji observed :

“It appears to me that as days pass by not only Ahmedabad but India will be proud of this twenty-two days’ struggle, and India will come to believe that where a struggle can be conducted in this manner we can hope for much. This struggle has been conducted without any hostility. I have never come across such a fight. I have known many such conflicts directly or indirectly, but I have not seen a single struggle where there was so little animosity or bitterness exhibited as in this fight. I hope that you will maintain the peace observed during the strike”.

Gandhiji would not encourage those who demanded as part of the settlement that wages should be paid for the period when the workers were locked out. In his leaflet on the settlement he characterized such insistence as altogether unworthy.

“Asking for payment for the lock-out period is tantamount to carrying on the struggle with the money of the employers. Such an idea is humiliating to the workers. Soldiers should fight on their own strength. Again, the employers had paid off all the old wages ; so that now it may be said that the workers are beginning employment afresh. Therefore, taking everything into consideration the workers should give up all idea about claiming pay for the period of the lock-out.” *

The following words uttered by Gandhiji in that evening’s meeting were touching.

“I must apologize to the employers. I have pained them very much. The oath to fast was taken to influence the workers ; but everything in this world has two sides. So my oath had an effect on the employers also. I apologize to them humbly for this. I am as much their servant as the workers’. My only request is that both should use my service freely.”

* After the mills re-opened, there were some stray disputes about these wages. For this, both the workers and the employers were equally responsible.

There remains nothing to add to this history except to say that the arbitrator seeing that the mill-owners were making double or triple their old profits, decided that 35 per cent increase should be given to the workers. Thus what Gandhiji told the workers — “We shall be able to get 35 per cent increase from the arbitrator” — literally came true.

Thanks to Gandhiji's penance, Ahmedabad — and through Ahmedabad the whole of India — had the benefit of this straight, noble and righteous struggle. In different parts of India, many times in the past struggles have taken place between millowners and workers, but not one of them was conducted as was this one, with clean weapons, on the strength of will-power rather than of wealth, and with complete sweetness. In no struggle was the result so beneficial and ennobling to both the sides.

II

LEAFLETS ISSUED DURING THE STRUGGLE

1

The lock-out commenced on the 22nd February. From that date the workers of the Weaving Department have been compelled to remain without work. When the millowners issued notices withdrawing the Plague Bonus and there was unrest because of it, the employers resolved to get the dispute settled by arbitration, and it was assumed that the workers would agree. Accordingly the millowners resolved on 14-2-'18 to appoint an arbitration-board to decide what increase in lieu of the Plague Bonus was justified because of increase in the cost of living. Mahatma Gandhi, Shri Shankerlal Banker and Shri Vallabhbhai Patel representing the workers, and Sheth Ambalal Sarabhai, Sheth Jagabhai Dalpatbhai and Sheth Chandulal representing the employers, with the Collector as Chairman, were appointed to arbitrate. Thereafter workers in some of the mills struck work due to misunderstanding. That was a mistake, and the workers were ready to rectify it. The employers, however, thought that the workers were in the wrong in striking before the Award was given by the arbitrators, and, therefore, they cancelled their resolution regarding arbitration. They simultaneously passed a resolution that workers be paid off their due wages and be discharged if they were not content with a 20 per cent increase. The weavers were not satisfied and accepted a discharge, and the lock-out by the employers commenced.

But the arbitrators for the workers felt it their responsibility to tell the workers, under the circumstances, what increase they could properly demand. They decided amongst themselves after full discussion that 35 per cent increase was proper and decided to advise the workers accordingly. But before doing so they intimated their intention to the millowners and promised to consider if they had anything to say against it. The employers did not express their view on this matter. The workers whose demand was for a 50 per cent increase withdrew it and resolved to ask for a 35 per cent increase according to the advice of their arbitrators.

Workers' Pledge

The workers have resolved :

(1) Not to resume work until a 35 per cent increase on the July wages is secured.

(2) During the period of the lock-out — not to cause any disturbance, not to indulge in beating or assaulting, not to commit robbery, not to damage employers' property, not to use abusive language, but to remain peaceful.

2

We saw in yesterday's issue what the workers' pledge is. We have now to consider what we should do to carry out that pledge. We know that the employers have crores of rupees and the workers have nothing. But if workers have no money, they have hands and feet which can do work, and there is no part of the world which can do without workers. If the worker, therefore, realizes this, he will know that he holds the key to the situation. Wealth is useless

without the worker. If the worker realizes this, then he can be sure of success, provided he has also certain qualities. Without them he is worthless. Let us see what these qualities are :

(1) The worker should be truthful. There is no reason for him to tell a lie. Even if he tells a lie he will not get the desired wage. The truthful can be firm and a worker who is firm is never defeated.

(2) He should possess courage. Many of us become permanent slaves through fear of what might happen to us if we lost our jobs.

(3) He should have a sense of justice. If he asks for wages higher than his deserts, there will be hardly any one who will employ him. The increase we have demanded in this struggle is just. We should, therefore, have faith that sooner or later we are bound to get it.

(4) He will not show anger nor harbour animosity towards his employer. Every human being is liable to err. It is our belief that the employers err in not giving us the increase asked for. If we remain straightforward till the end, the employers are sure to rectify their mistake. At present they are full of wrath. Also they suspect that if the present demands of the workers are granted, the workers will always harass them. To remove this suspicion, we should do our utmost to re-assure the employers by our behaviour. The first step in this direction is not to harbour enmity towards them.

(5) Every worker should remember that there is bound to be suffering for him in such a big struggle. But happiness follows misery deliberately suffered. That we do not get enough to eat is a misery. But we have been suffering it due to our ignorance.

To remove this miserable plight we have now represented to the employers that it is not possible for us to maintain ourselves without the demanded increase in wages. Under the circumstances we have decided deliberately to suffer the pangs of hunger, if we do not get the increase demanded to remove our perpetual starvation. How long can the employers continue without showing compassion towards us?

(6) Lastly, the worker should remember that God is the helper of the poor. It is for us to struggle and we are bound to be rewarded according to His will. We should realize this, trust in Him, and remain peaceful so long as our request is not granted.

A worker who behaves in the aforesaid manner will never find it difficult to keep to his pledge.

3

Today we shall discuss how the workers should spend their time during the lock-out. There is a proverb among us that the idle resort to mischief. It is, therefore, not at all good that ten thousand men should remain idle in Ahmedabad. Let us start by saying what the workers ought not to do.

1. They should not waste their time in gambling.

2. Nor pass the time by sleeping during the day.

3. They should not spend all the time in talking of the employers and the lock-out.

4. They should not frequent tea-shops. Many go to hotels and discuss useless things there and eat unnecessarily.

5. They should not go to the mills during the continuance of the lock-out.

Now in regard to what the workers should do :

1. The dwellings of many workers and their surroundings are generally dirty. The workers are unable to attend to this when they are at work. Now when they are compelled to be idle, they should utilize some of the time in cleaning their houses and compounds and repairing them.

2. Those who are literate should spend their time in reading books and increasing their knowledge. They can also teach the illiterate. If they do so, they will learn to help each other. Those who are fond of reading should go to the Dadabhai Library and Reading Room or such other free reading rooms.

3. Those who know the art of tailoring, cabinet-making, or wood carving and engraving can find work for themselves. If they cannot, they can get our assistance in finding it.

4. Every person should acquire practical knowledge of at least one occupation besides the one from which he gets his livelihood. Workers can, therefore, spend their time in learning some new and easy occupation. To obtain such instruction they can secure our help.

In India a person in one occupation thinks it below his dignity to follow any other occupation. Besides, he considers some occupations low and degrading. Both these ideas are wrong. There is no question of inferiority or superiority among occupations which are essential for a man's existence. Nor is there any shame in taking up an occupation other than the one we are used to. We believe that weaving cloth, breaking stones, sawing wood or splitting it, or working in a farm are all necessary and honourable

occupations. It is, therefore, hoped that instead of wasting time in idleness, workers will utilize it in such good work.

4

We have said how workers can fulfil their pledge, and what they should do during the lock-out. Now we shall state in this leaflet how we propose to help them.

Let us state firstly what we cannot do :

(1) We shall not help the workers in doing anything which is wrong.

(2) We shall have to abandon the workers and cease helping them if they do wrong or make exaggerated demands, or commit violence.

(3) We can never wish ill of the employers ; and in every action of ours, we shall take into consideration their good. We would seek the welfare of the workers while at the same time we safe-guard the employers' interests.

Now as to what we shall do for the workers :

(1) We shall work for the workers so long as they maintain good conduct as they have done hitherto.

(2) We shall do all we can to obtain for them 35 per cent increase in wages.

(3) We are still requesting the employers. We have not yet attempted to win public sympathy, or educate public opinion. But we are prepared to acquaint the whole of India regarding the workers' condition when the proper time comes, and we hope to obtain public sympathy for our cause.

(4) We shall not rest till the workers have attained their right.

(5) We are trying to acquaint ourselves with the condition of the workers in its economic, moral, and educational aspects. We shall show the workers how they should improve their economic condition. We shall strive to raise their moral level. We shall find out and show them how to live more cleanly if they are living in filth. We shall try to impart knowledge to them if they are ignorant.

(6) We shall assist those who are reduced to starvation in this struggle and cannot find any work. We shall eat and clothe ourselves only after feeding and clothing them.

(7) We shall nurse the sick and get the assistance of *vaidyas* and doctors.

We have undertaken this task with the full realization of our responsibility. We consider the workers' demand to be entirely just. We believe that eventually satisfaction of that demand will not harm the employers' interests but will do them good. It is because of this that we have joined this struggle.

5

We shall now consider the employers' position.

Workers' efforts can lead to either of these two results :

(1) Workers may get a 35 per cent increase in wages, or

(2) They may have to resume work without securing any rise.

If the workers get an increase it would benefit them and the employers would get the credit. If the workers have to resume work without any increase, they would be despondent and submit slavely to the employers in a sullen manner. It is, therefore,

beneficial to both sides if the workers get an increase. In the workers' defeat the employers have much to lose.

The employers' efforts can produce one of these two results :

(1) The employers may give the workers an increase in wages.

(2) They may not give the workers any increase.

If the employers give the workers an increase, the workers would be satisfied, they would get justice. The employers are afraid that if the workers are given what they demand they would become insolent. This fear is baseless. Even if workers are suppressed today, it is not impossible that they would get insolent when an opportunity arises. It is even possible that the suppressed workers may harbour animosity. The history of the world shows that wherever the workers are suppressed, they have risen in revolt whenever they had an opportunity. The employers feel that conceding the workers' demand would enhance the influence of their advisers on them. If the arguments of their advisers are true, if they are industrious, the workers will never leave them either in defeat or in victory ; and be it noted that the advisers also will not abandon the workers. Those who have accepted service of the workers as a duty will not forsake it even if they have to incur the displeasure of the employers. The more disappointed they are, the more devoted will they become in their service. Strive as they might, the employers will never succeed in removing the advisers from the workers. After all what will they get by defeating the workers ? The reply is that they will get nothing but the workers'

discontent. The employers will always look with suspicion on the suppressed workers.

The employers will satisfy the workers if they grant the increase demanded. If the workers fail in their duty, the employers can always rely on the help of the advisers, and stop the loss now caused to both sides. The workers will ever remain grateful if their demand is met and there will be goodwill between the employers and the workers. Thus in the workers' success lies the success of the employers, and in their defeat lies the defeat of the employers. Instead of this pure justice, the employers have adopted the Western or modern devilish kind of justice so called.

6

Pure justice is that which is inspired by fellow feeling and compassion. We in India call it Eastern or ancient justice. Where there is no place for fellow-feeling or compassion, it is known as devilish or Western or modern justice. Out of feeling or regard a father gives up many things for the son, and vice versa, and in so doing both eventually gain. In giving up for another, the giver experiences a feeling of pride and considers it a sign of his strength and not of weakness. There was a time in India when servants used to serve in the same household from father to son for generations. They were respected and treated as members of the family where they served. They shared the misery of the employer, and the employer was with them in their joy and sorrow. When this was the state of affairs the social order in India was simple, and it lasted for thousands of years on that basis. Even now this feeling is not altogether absent in our country. Where such an arrangement exists there is

hardly any need for a third person or an arbitrator. The disputes between master and servant are settled by both together amicably. Nor did the increase and reduction in wages or a demand for them depend on each other's need. Servants did not ask for higher wages when there was a dearth of servants, and masters did not reduce wages when the supply was plentiful. This was mainly due to mutual regard, discipline, courtesy and affection. This was not then, as it is now, considered impractical, since such relationship between master and servant was what generally prevailed in our country. History records that many great deeds were achieved by our people because they had made this pure justice the law of their life. This is the ancient or Eastern justice.

A totally different way of life prevails in the West today. It is not to be supposed that all persons in the West approve of modern justice. There are many saintly persons in the West who lead a life of purity, adopting the ancient standard. But in most public activities of the West at present there is no place for feeling or mercy. It is considered just that a master pays his servant, as he finds convenient. It is not considered necessary to think of the servant's requirements. So also the worker can at will make a demand, irrespective of the employer's financial condition, and it is considered just. Each thus thinks only of himself and is not bound to think of the other. The present war in Europe is fought on the same principle. Nothing is considered improper, when the enemy is to be subdued. Such wars must have been fought even in the past, but the vast masses of the people were not involved in them. It is desirable that we do not introduce this despicable 'justice' into

India. If workers make a demand merely because they feel they have the strength to do so, regardless of the employers' condition, it will mean that they have succumbed to the modern demoniacal justice. That the employers do not consider the workers' demands means that they have accepted the principle of modern justice, may be, unconsciously and out of ignorance. Mobilizing forces by employers against workers is like raising an army of elephants against ants. Considering from the point of righteousness, the employers should shrink before opposing the workers. In ancient India the workers' starvation was never consciously used as the employers' opportunity. That line of action which does not harm either party to a dispute is alone justice. We have been confidently hoping that the Jain and Vaishnava employers of this Capital city of glorious Gujarat will never consider it their victory to subdue the workers or deliberately to give them less than their due. We believe that this Western influence will die out soon. At any rate, we want the workers to observe the ancient justice and its canons as we know them, and only thus do we wish to help them to secure their rights.

7

South Africa is a large British Colony. The Europeans have been there for over four hundred years. They have freedom to govern themselves. There are many European workers employed in the railways of that country. These workers felt dissatisfied with their wages ; but instead of trying to have their wages increased, they thought of capturing the Government. That was unjust ; it was devilish justice. It resulted in bitterness between the

Government and labour, and the entire South African country was frightened. Nobody felt secure. Ultimately open fighting took place between the parties and some innocent persons were killed. The military surrounded every place. Both parties suffered heavily. Each desired to defeat the other. Neither cared for justice. Both told exaggerated tales against each other. Neither had regard for the feelings of the other.

While this was going on our workers behaved justly. When the above-mentioned railway strike took place, a strike involving 20,000 Indian workers was going on. We were fighting the Government of that country for justice. The weapon of our workers was Satyagraha. They had no enmity with the Government, nor did they wish ill of it. They had no desire to dislodge it. The European workers wanted to exploit the strike of the Indians. Our workers refused to be exploited. They said "Ours is a struggle of Truth. We do not desire to harass the Government. We will, therefore, suspend our struggle during the period of your fight." With this statement our workers stopped the strike. We call this true justice. Eventually our workers succeeded, and the Government too got credit, because it was just enough to accept our demand. Our workers respected the feelings of the other side, and did not seek to benefit out of the opponent's embarrassment. At the end of the struggle, the bonds of love between the Government and us became closer. Respect for us was higher. Thus a struggle fought on the basis of true justice is beneficial to both the sides.

If we conduct our struggle on the same basis with a sense of justice, if we bear no malice towards the

employers and we rely always on the right, we shall not only succeed but good relations between workers and employers will increase.

Another matter to be noted in the above instance is that in a struggle for Truth, both sides need not be followers of Truth. Even if one side keeps to the Truth, the struggle for Truth is bound to succeed. The party which initially uses venom finds that since the other party does not use venom, his venom dries up. If a man violently swings his hand in the air, he only sprains his hand thereby. Similarly venom by itself is useless and self-injurious ; but opposed with venom, it becomes deadly. We, therefore, should understand that if we fight non-violently and do not lose courage, we are bound to succeed in the end.

8

In this issue we are not going to discuss Satyagrahis, who have become famous in the world. It would be more advantageous for us and strengthen us to know to what extent common men like ourselves have been able to suffer non-violently. Imam Hassan and Hussein were bold and resolute Satyagrahis. We adore their names, but we do not become Satyagrahis merely by remembering them. We feel that there can be no comparison between our capacity and theirs. An equally memorable name is that of the devotee Prahlad. But we think that we are not capable of such devotion, resoluteness, love for truth and courage, and so finally we remain what we are. Therefore, let us on this occasion think of what other persons who were like ourselves have done. Such a Satyagrahi was Harbatsing.

Harbatsing was an old man of 75 years. He had gone to South Africa on a five-year contract to work on an agricultural farm on a monthly salary of seven rupees. When the strike of 20,000 Indians, referred to in the last issue, commenced he also joined it. Some strikers were jailed, and Harbatsing was among them. His companions pleaded with him and said ; " It is not for you to plunge in this sea of misery. You are not fit for jail. No one can blame you, if you do not join such a struggle." Harbatsing replied ; " When all of you suffer so much for our honour, what shall I do by remaining out of jail ? What does it matter even if I 'die in jail ? " And verily, Harbatsing died in jail and became immortal. Had he died outside, no one would have noticed his death. But as he died in jail the Indian community asked for his dead body and hundreds of Indians joined his funeral procession.

Similar to Harbatsing is the case of the Transvaal merchant — Ahmad Muhammad Kachhalia. By the grace of God he is still alive, and resides in South Africa taking care of the Indian community and keeping its honour intact. During the struggle in which Harbatsing lost his life, Kachhalia went to prison several times. He allowed his business to be ruined. And though he now lives in poverty he is respected everywhere. He kept up his resolve and suffered numerous calamities.

Just as an old workman and a middle-aged merchant fought for their word and suffered, so also did a girl of seventeen years. Her name was Valliyamma. She also went to jail for the honour of the community in that struggle. She was suffering from fever when she was jailed. The fever increased

during imprisonment. The jailor suggested that she may leave the jail, but Valliyamma refused to go out and finished her sentence resolutely. She died on the fourth or the fifth day after her release from jail.

The Satyagraha of all the three was pure. All the three suffered hardships, went to jail but kept their pledge. There is no such cloud hanging over us. The utmost we have to suffer in keeping our pledge is to give up our comforts to some extent, and to manage to live without the wages we were hitherto getting. It is not very difficult. It should not be difficult for us to do what our brothers and sisters have done in our own age.

We shall consider this matter a little further in the next issue.

9

Yesterday we discussed the examples of three Satyagrahis; they were not the only Satyagrahis in that struggle. 20,000 workers were out of work at a time, and the trouble was not over within twelve days. The entire struggle lasted for seven years and during that period hundreds of men lived under great suspense and anxiety and stuck to their resolve. 20,000 workers lived homeless and without wages for three months. Many sold whatever goods they had. They left their huts, sold their beds and mattresses and cattle, and marched forth. Hundreds of them marched 20 miles a day for several days, only on 3/4 lb. of flour and an ounce of sugar. There were Hindus as well as Muslims among them. One of them is the son of the Moazim of the Jumma Masjid of Bombay. His name is Imam Saheb Abdul Kader Bawazir. He who had never suffered any hardship before, endured

the rigours of jail life and during imprisonment cleaned roads, broke stones, did other hard labour, and lived on tasteless and simple food for months. At present he has not a pie with him. Similar is the case of Dadamiya Kaji of Surat. Two seventeen-year old youngsters of Madras — Narayanswami and Nagappan — suffered in the heat and sacrificed their lives, but did not give in. Also women who had never walked before took to hawking, and worked in jail as washer-women.

Considering these examples which worker among us will not be prepared to suffer ordinary inconvenience to keep his troth ?

In the leaflets issued by the employers many unbecoming things have been written in anger ; many things have been consciously or unconsciously exaggerated, and some have been twisted. As Satyagrahis we cannot meet anger with anger. It is not proper even to correct the mis-statements contained therein. It is just sufficient to say that we should neither be misled nor get peeved by such writings. If the allegations made against the advisers of labour are true, they cannot be falsified by our merely contradicting them. We know that they are unfair. But we shall rely on our future behaviour to prove them to be so.

10

It is hardly a fortnight since the lock-out commenced, and yet some say that they have no food, others that they cannot pay even house rent. The condition of the houses of most workmen is very bad ; there is not sufficient light or ventilation in them. The houses are very old. The surroundings are filthy.

The clothes worn by workers are dirty. Some cannot afford the washerman's charges, others say that they cannot afford soap. The workers' children run about the streets. They go without any schooling. Some of the workers use their young children for earning money. Such extreme poverty is regrettable. But a 35 per cent increase is not the only cure for it. Even if wages are doubled, but other remedies are not adopted, they would still remain poor. There are many reasons for this poverty. We shall consider some of them to-day.

On enquiry from workers we learn that when they are short of money they pay interest ranging from one anna to four annas per rupee per month. This is a terrible drain. He who pays such interest even once can hardly extricate himself from it later. Let us consider this a little. Interest on sixteen rupees at one anna per rupee is one rupee. People who pay interest at this rate pay an amount equivalent to the principal in one year and four months. This amounts to 75 per cent interest. Even twelve to sixteen per cent interest is considered high ; how then can a man paying 75 per cent interest survive at all ? Then what shall we say of a man who pays four annas on a rupee per month ? Such a person pays four rupees per month on sixteen rupees and pays an amount equal to the principal in four months. This amounts to three hundred per cent interest ! People who pay such interest are always in debt and cannot get out of it. Mohammad the Prophet had realized how heavily the burden of interest weighed on the poor. Therefore, the strict injunctions in the Holy Quran against charging interest. For similar reasons

the rule of 'not more than twice the principal' must have been prescribed in the Hindu Scriptures.

If on account of the present struggle all workers take an oath not to pay such excessive interest they will relieve themselves of an unbearable burden. Nobody should pay an interest higher than twelve per cent. Some may say : all this is quite good, but how shall we pay back what we have already taken on interest ? It will be with us for a lifetime. In this situation the best way is to start a mutual aid movement among workers which can help them with money. We know that there are some who can rescue their co-workers who are crushed under the load of interest. Outsiders will hardly interfere in this. Those alone will help who have trust in us. The workers should free themselves from this scourge at any risk. Payment of such high interest is a major cause of their poverty.

11

As days pass by, more and more leaflets misleading the workers are being issued by the employers. It is also rumoured that the lock-out is to be lifted on Tuesday, and that those workers who return will be taken back. It is also said that he who brings with him five or more other workers will be given a reward. Nothing needs to be done against these tactics. Employers are entitled to prevail upon workers to resume work by employing others to persuade them. But what is the workers' duty ? They have stated that an increase of 20 per cent is not adequate and have given notice accordingly. They have taken an oath not to accept anything less than 35 per cent. Under these circumstances the

worker cannot go back without compromising his pledge, his honour, and his manliness. But it is possible that every worker may not have such a sense of honour. Some may not even have taken the pledge. A few are from outside Gujarat, and may not be attending our evening meetings. It would be wrong even if such workers resumed work with a 20 per cent increase. It is our duty to find out such ignorant workers and acquaint them with the true state of affairs. But even they should not be coerced.

Tomorrow, i.e. Tuesday morning we are to meet at 7-30 a.m. at the usual place. The best way not to be tempted by the employers' re-opening the mills is to attend the meeting. You should also look for workers from other parts of the country, who are not known to you, and who have hitherto not attended these meetings, and bring them to the meeting. In these days your mind is likely to waver due to the various steps taken by the millowners to tempt you. It is very painful for a working man to be without a job. The meetings will be helpful to you to keep up your resolve.

For those who know their strength, remaining without their regular work is no problem. In fact the worker can be so independent that if he realizes his true worth he will never feel uneasy on losing a job. The wealth of a rich person may disappear or be stolen or be exhausted by misuse. Or due to miscalculations the rich man may have to face even bankruptcy. But a worker's capital is inexhaustible; it cannot be stolen, and he gets the desired interest from it all the time. His hands and feet, his skill and energy, constitute his inexhaustible capital, and wages are his interest. Normally a worker who works

harder earns more interest. An idle worker should certainly starve. He may be despondent. But the industrious has no cause to be uneasy even for a moment.

12

A new chapter begins from to-day. The employers have decided to lift the lock-out and have expressed their willingness to take back those who are ready to accept the 20 per cent increase. Therefore, the lock-out by the employers comes to an end to-day and the strike by the workers commences. You have all seen the announcement of this decision made by the employers. They say that many workers are ready to resume work, but are unable to do so owing to the lock-out. This information of the employers ill accords with the daily meetings of the workers and the oath they have taken. Either the information of the employers is true or the presence of the workers in the daily meetings and the oath they have taken is true. The workers have considered all things before taking the pledge and now they cannot resume work without securing a 35 per cent increase, whatever may be the temptation or the misery they may have to encounter. Herein lies their honesty. If you weigh a pledge against *lakhs* of rupees, the weight of the pledge will be greater. We are sure that the workers will never forget this. The workers have no other way to rise higher, except to stand by their oath, and it is our conviction that if the employers realize it, their welfare too lies in the workers' keeping their oath. Eventually even the employers will not gain by taking work from workers who cannot keep their oath. A religiously-minded person would never feel

happy in compelling a person to break his pledge, nor would he try to do so. We have, however, no time now to think of the employers' duty. They know their duty. We can only request them. But the workers must think seriously about their duty.

Let us consider what workers are likely to gain by breaking their oath. At present, in India any honest person can earn twenty to twenty-five rupees per month by intelligent work. The worst that can happen to him will be that his employers may dismiss him and he may have to look for other work. A thoughtful worker should realize that he can get work anywhere after a few days' search. But we are sure that the employers do not want to adopt such a drastic step as to dismiss the workers. If workers are firm in their resolve even the hardest hearts will relent.

It is possible that the workers from outside Gujarat (i.e. those from the North or the South) do not have an adequate idea of this struggle. In public work we do not, and we do not desire to distinguish between Hindu, Muslim, Gujarati, Madrasi, Punjabi, etc. We are all one and desire to be one. We should, therefore, give to them correct information about this struggle in a sympathetic manner, and they should be made to realize that it is to their advantage as well as to everybody else's that they identify themselves with the rest of us.

Rumours are afloat that many workers are willing to resume work, but that others prevent them by coercion and by threats of physical assault. It is necessary for every worker to remember our resolve

that if they bring pressure to bear on their fellows and stop them from going to work by threats, we shall not be able to help them at all. In this struggle he alone will succeed who keeps to his pledge voluntarily. No one can be forced to keep his honour inviolate. It is essentially a voluntary matter. We want to keep to our pledge and go ahead. If a man is overpowered by fear and cannot do anything, there is no hope for him to march ahead. If coercion is used the whole struggle is likely to be weakened and will collapse. The workers' struggle depends solely on the justice of their demand and the rightness of their action. If their demand is unjust they cannot succeed. Even if the demand is just, if the worker in trying to secure it, uses injustice, tells falsehood, cheats, coerces, or slackens he will fail in spite of all his suffering. Not to coerce any one and to labour for one's own maintenance are principles which it is very essential to observe in this struggle.

14

As money is the weapon of the rich, so is work the weapon of the worker. Just as a rich man would starve if he does not use wealth, even so if the worker does not use his wealth — does not work — he will also starve. One who does not work is not a worker. A worker who is ashamed to work has no right to eat. If, therefore, the workers desire to fulfil their pledge in this great struggle, they should learn to do some work or other. Those who collect funds and remaining idle maintain themselves out of such funds have no right to succeed. Workers are fighting this fight for their pledge. Those who want food without working for it cannot be said to understand the

meaning of sticking to one's oath. Keeping to one's pledge implies having a sense of honour and self-respect. Who will not look down on those who desire to be maintained on public funds without doing any work? It behoves us, therefore, that we earn our livelihood by doing work. If a worker does not work, he is like sugar which has lost its sweetness.

This struggle is not merely to get a 35 per cent increase; it is to show that workers are prepared to suffer for their rights. We are fighting to uphold our prestige. We have launched on this struggle in order to improve ourselves. If we begin making an improper use of public money, we shall deteriorate instead of improving. Think about it in whatever manner we like, we find that we must maintain ourselves by our own labour.

Farhad broke stones for the sake of Shirin, his beloved. For the workers their pledge is their Shirin. Why should they not break stones for it? For the sake of truth Harishchandra sold himself; why should workers not suffer hardships for being true to their pledge? For their faith Imam Hassan and Hussein suffered greatly. Why should we not be prepared even to die for our honour? If we get money sitting at home without doing any work and fight, it would be wrong to say that we fought at all.

It is, therefore, our hope that every worker will work to maintain himself and keep to his oath and remain firm. If the struggle lengthens it will be due to our weakness. So long as the millowners believe that workers will not take to any labour and, therefore, will eventually succumb, they will not be inspired by kindness and will remain opposed. So

long as they are not convinced that workers will not abandon their oath, they will not be moved by kindness and will oppose the workers even at the cost of their own profit. When, however, they feel certain that the workers will not give up their resolve under any circumstances, then they are sure to become compassionate and to welcome back the workers. To-day the employers believe that the workers are not going to do any work, and so are bound to succumb very shortly. If workers depend on others' money for their livelihood, millowners will think that such help is sure to terminate sooner or later ; and they will not listen to the workers. If, on the other hand, workers who have no means of subsistence begin to do manual work, the employers will feel that they will lose their workers unless they pay the 35 per cent increase. Thus it is we who can shorten or lengthen the struggle. We can secure earlier relief by enduring greater misery just now. If we do not suffer, the struggle is bound to lengthen. Those who have become weak, will, we hope, become strong through these considerations.

Special Instruction

Some workers believe that those who have become weak cannot be persuaded to become strong. This belief is entirely unjustified. It is our duty as well as yours to persuade those who have become weak, for some reason or the other. It is our duty to impart knowledge to those who do not know what the struggle is. We must of course not force any one to remain with us, by threats, falsehood, assault or any other form of coercion. You should not lose courage if those who are not convinced by persuasion go back

to work. Even if only one man is left out, we will not forsake him under any circumstances.

15

It is necessary to understand the motive and significance of Gandhiji's vow to fast. The first thing to be remembered is that his vow is not intended to influence the employers. If the fast is conceived in that spirit it will adversely affect our struggle and our honour. We want justice from the employers, not pity. If there is to be any sympathy, let it be shown towards the workers. We believe that it is their duty to show sympathy for them. But we shall be ridiculed if we accept 35 per cent as the result of the employers' pity for Gandhiji. Workers cannot accept it on that basis. If Gandhiji exploited his relation with the employers or the community in this manner, it would be misuse of his position, and he would lose his prestige. What relation could there be between Gandhiji's fast and the workers' wages? Even if fifty persons determine to starve themselves to death on the employers' premises, how can the employers give the workers a 35 per cent increase if they have no right to it? If it becomes a common practice to gain rights in that manner, it would be impossible to carry on the affairs of society. Employers cannot and need not pay attention to this fast of Gandhiji.

Even so, it must be granted that such an action by Gandhiji cannot but influence the employers. We should be sorry to the extent the employers are influenced by this action. But at the same time we cannot dissociate ourselves from any far-reaching consequences that might result from Gandhiji's fast.

Let us examine the objects for which the fast has been undertaken. Gandhiji saw that the oath was losing its value among the workers. Some of them were ready to break their pledge out of fear of starvation. It is intolerable that ten thousand men should give up their oath. A man becomes weak by not keeping a vow and ultimately loses his manhood. It has, therefore, become our duty to do our utmost to assist the workers to abide by their oath. Gandhiji thought that if he fasted, it would show how much he himself valued a pledge. Moreover, the workers were talking of starvation. 'Starve but keep your vow' was Gandhiji's message to them. He at least must put his message into practice. That he could do only if he himself was prepared to die of starvation. Besides, workers would not work and wanted financial help. This was a terrible thing. If it were permitted there would be utter chaos in the country. Only in one way could Gandhiji effectively demonstrate to workers that the suffering involved in work should not be avoided. He himself should suffer. He did manual work but that was not enough. He considered a fast as a means for fulfilling the many purposes for which it was undertaken. That fast he would break only when workers get 35 per cent or if they deliberately gave up their vow altogether. The desired result was achieved. Those who were present when he took the vow to fast understood the full implications of the step. Workers were greatly stirred ; they began to do manual work, and their honour and integrity remained intact.

The workers realized that they would secure justice at the hands of the employers only if they remained firm by their oath. They were strengthened

by Gandhiji's fast. They understood that they had to fight with their own strength, and that the uplift of the workers depended on the workers themselves.

16

SHRI SHANKERLAL BANKER'S LEAFLET

This is the first leaflet I write for you. I wish, therefore, to state at the very outset that my right to advise you is only nominal. I have not done any manual labour. I have not suffered the miseries that workers have to endure, nor can I do anything myself to remove that misery. Therefore, I feel hesitant in giving advice on this occasion. But, even though I have done nothing for you in the past it is my keen desire to do what I can hereafter according to my capacity. I write this with that desire.

Two days ago our situation had taken a serious turn. Some of you were in straightened circumstances, but instead of taking to labour to get relief from those circumstances as urged so often by Gandhiji, it was apprehended that some of you would break the vow and get back to the mills. But that situation has now passed away. Our dull hearts have been quickened by Gandhiji's fast. We have become conscious of the seriousness of our oath. We are convinced that 'we shall not break the oath even at the cost of our lives' is not a slogan merely to be repeated in meetings but has to be demonstrated in action. As a proof of this change in the situation, those who are in financial difficulty have willingly begun to do manual work. Not only so, but also those who are better off have set an example by assisting from their wages those in need, and have removed the possibility of a split among us for all time. But that

is not enough. A very heavy responsibility has come over us by Gandhiji's fast ; and if we understand that responsibility fully, we should exert ourselves to the utmost to end this struggle as soon as possible. We should adopt all such means as would shorten the struggle consistently with keeping to our pledge. Our oath is to obtain a 35 per cent increase. And we know that financially it is not difficult for the employers to give the 35 per cent increase. But employers feel that if they gave the 35 per cent, the workers will become domineering and insolent, that they will become unruly at the slightest provocation, and ruin the industry by resorting to strikes on trifling matters. I see no reason for entertaining such a fear. Workers can never desire that an industry which gives them their daily bread should be destroyed. But if workers behave without discretion and without thinking about justice or injustice, such a result is inevitable. If we desire to be saved from it, we should determine to work regularly for the millowners in good faith. We should decide not to make unreasonable demands, and not to resort to remedies like strikes to secure justice until all other avenues are exhausted. But our task is not over with such a determination. We have to go to the employers, acquaint them with our decision and win their confidence. We have to remove the misapprehension which restrains them from giving us the 35 per cent increase. I strongly urge upon the workers to take immediate steps in this direction.

VICTORY FOR BOTH

We have said in the previous leaflets that in Satyagraha both the parties invariably succeed. He who struggles for the truth and obtains it, of course succeeds. But even he who first opposed the truth and later realizes it and concedes it, should be considered to have succeeded. From that standpoint the workers' pledge is fulfilled as well as the employers' and so both the parties have won. The employers had taken an oath that they will not give more than 20 per cent. We have respected their oath also. So both have retained their prestige. Let us now see what the settlement is :

1. Workers are to resume work to-morrow, i.e. on the 20th, and on that day they will get a 35 per cent increase ; on the 21st, a 20 per cent increase.

2. From the 22nd they will get an increase not exceeding 35 per cent, according to the decision of the arbitrator.

3. The foremost litterateur of Gujarat, a saintly person, Prof. Anandshanker Bapubhai Dhruva, M.A., LL.B., a professor and Vice-Principal of the Gujarat College, will be Arbitrator.

4. The Arbitrator should give his award within three months. During the period, workers will be paid an increase of $27\frac{1}{2}$ per cent, i.e. the workers will have to give up half of their demand and the employers half of theirs.

5. Whatever amount is decided by the Arbitrator will be adjusted against the $27\frac{1}{2}$ per cent, i.e. if the Arbitrator awards more than $27\frac{1}{2}$ per cent, the employers will give that increase, and if he awards less than $27\frac{1}{2}$ per cent, the workers will refund the excess.

Two things have been accomplished by this settlement. First, the honour of the workers is upheld ; secondly, if a serious dispute arises between parties it should be settled not by resort to a strike but by arbitration. It is not one of the terms of the settlement that in future the parties settle their differences by arbitration ; but since the settlement has come about through arbitration it is presumed that on a similar occasion in future also an arbitrator will be appointed. It is not to be understood that an arbitrator will be appointed even in regard to trifling differences. It will be humiliating to both parties if a third party has always to intervene whenever there is a difference between the employers and the workers. Employers cannot tolerate it. They will not do their business under such conditions. The world has always respected wealth, and wealth will, therefore, always demand respect. Consequently if workers harass the employers for trifles, their relations will break. We believe that workers will not cause such needless annoyance. We must also advise them that they should not strike thoughtlessly. We cannot assist them if they go on strike without consulting us.

Doubt has been raised as to whether the oath can be said to be really fulfilled when we obtain 35 per cent only for one day. Is it not too much like the way we appease children ? In some settlements such deceptions have taken place, but it is not so here. We

have accepted 35 per cent for one day deliberately, in view of the circumstances. "We shall not resume work without securing a 35 per cent increase" is capable of two meanings. We shall not accept anything less than 35 per cent increase for all time is one meaning, and we shall resume work with 35 per cent increase and it is enough even if we get it for a day is the other meaning. Those who determined that a demand for a 35 per cent permanent increase alone constitutes pure justice, and who have inexhaustible strength in them to fight till they get it, would consider their pledge fulfilled only if they got a 35 per cent increase permanently. But our determination was not such. We were always ready to secure justice through arbitration. We had decided on a 35 per cent increase unilaterally. Before we advised workers to demand 35 per cent we did desire to hear from the employers themselves their side of the question. Unfortunately it could not be. So we examined their side to the best extent possible and advised a demand for 35 per cent. But we cannot say that the 35 per cent assessed by us was infallible. We have never said so. If employers show us our mistake we may advise workers to accept less. If the Arbitrator feels that a smaller increase is proper, we shall accept less, and our vow will not thereby be broken at all. We have accepted the principle of arbitration for all time. We believe we have not committed a mistake in deciding upon a 35 per cent increase ; we, therefore, hope that we shall get that percentage. But if we find that we were mistaken we shall willingly accept less.

We ourselves have asked for three months' time. Employers were willing to accept a fortnight's time limit. We have however to make some inquiries in

Bombay to prove the justice of our demand. It is also very necessary to show to the Arbitrator the conditions prevailing here, and to make him study the living conditions of workers. So long as he does not know these things, he cannot have a complete idea. Such detailed work cannot be completed in a few days. We shall however see that the work is finished as speedily as possible.

Some workers have expressed a desire that wages for the period of the lock-out should be obtained from the employers. We must say that we do not agree. Since we did not accept the 20 per cent increase, either a strike or a lock-out became necessary. That we suffered for 22 days was our duty and in our own interest. We have had our reward for that suffering, namely this settlement. How can we now ask for wages for the period of the lock-out? To ask for wages for the lock-out amounts to fighting the struggle with the employers' money. Such thought should make the workers ashamed. A warrior must fight on his own strength. Again, the employers had paid off all wages due to the workmen before the lock-out, so that it can be said that workers now begin employment afresh. Taking all these things into consideration, workers should give up the idea of asking for wages for the period of the lock-out.

The wages will be due only after twenty days. What of the workers' maintenance in the meantime? Many may not have a pie left with them. Those who are in need of assistance before the date of payment should request their employers for it and we are sure the employers will provide the needed relief.

The workers must remember that their condition hereafter will depend on the quality of their work.

If they work sincerely, with courtesy and enthusiasm, they will please the employers and get much help from them. It would be a mistake to believe that everything can be secured only through us. We are prepared to serve labour in their difficulty, if needed, but their interest lies in considering the employers as their parents to the extent possible and getting whatever they want from them direct.

Peace is now the desideratum. Small troubles have to be tolerated. If you permit us we would like to help some of you to overcome your bad habits. We intend to educate you and your children. We desire an all-round improvement in your morals, in the health of your children and yourselves, and your economic condition. If you allow us we shall work amongst you for these ends.

The greatest victory of the workers is this — God has kept up their prestige — their vow. He who keeps his honour thus has got everything. Even if he gets the sovereignty of the world but loses his honour, it is as though he gained nothing.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE WORKERS

Dear Anandshankerbhai,

I beg leave to place the following information before you in connection with your enquiry to determine the wage increase due to employees of the weaving departments of the Ahmedabad mills.

It is necessary to consider the following two matters while deciding the increase to be given to the employees in the weaving department.

(1) What increased wages should the weavers get to enable them to lead a simple but contented life ?

(2) Can the mills give that increase or not ? If they cannot give it in full, how much can they afford to give ?

(1) How much increase is needed by the workers ?

It is necessary to state at the outset that the present standard of life of the workers is unsatisfactory. Even to maintain their present standard without improving it in the least, workers should be given 50 per cent increase on their July rates, because of increase in the cost of living ; and if instead of merely maintaining the present standard they are to improve it — if we desire to see the workers more healthy, clean, educated, and happy — then

over and above the increase on account of dearness they should be given an additional permanent increase. In the alternative the mills should arrange for well-ventilated houses, night-schools, reading rooms, dispensaries, clubs, and such other amenities.

The following facts will convince you that workers require a minimum increase of 50 per cent on July rates.

The calculation regarding the increase to be given to workers is made on their July wages, and it has been stated by Shri Ambalal that in that month they got Rs 22/- on an average. Now examining the estimated monthly expenditure of workers for that period, it appears that the amount of Rs 22/- was not adequate for their maintenance even then. A large proportion of workers' families are joint, and are composed of six, seven or more persons. But before giving the budget estimates for such joint families, we may give estimates on a conservative basis of the expenditure of an imaginary family of four persons consisting of father, mother, son and daughter.

A worker of the Weaving Dept., a two-loom (Muslim) weaver.

Family : 4 persons — 1 man, 1 woman,
1 boy, 1 girl; Earner — 1 man.

Monthly Expenditure

	Rs.	as.	ps.
Rice 1 maund	2	12	0
Pulses $\frac{1}{2}$ maund	1	3	0
Wheat 2 maunds	4	8	0
Mutton 4 Ib.	0	8	0
Fuel 4 maunds	1	4	0
	10	3	0
Vegetable 1 anna per day	1	14	0
Oil & condi- ments	1	0	0
Ghee, gur, sugar (occasionally)	1	0	0
Tea & milk	2	0	0
Hair oil	0	3	0
Soap	0	4	0
Shaving	0	6	0
bidis, betels	1	8	0
Rent	1	8	0
Kerosene	0	6	0
	20	4	0

Annual Expenditure

	Rs.	as.	ps.
Pants 4	4	0	0
Coats 3	3	12	0
Shirts 4	3	4	0
Shirts (Special variety) 2	1	14	0
Turban 1	1	5	0
Boots 4 pairs	12	0	0
Umbrella 1	1	2	0
Cap 1	0	2	6
Trousers 4	2	0	0
Shirts 4	3	0	0
Coats 4	2	4	0
Saris (short)	2	4	0
Peshvaj 1	4	8	0
women's trou- sers 4	3	0	0
women's shirts 4	3	0	0
Chappals	0	8	0
Bangles	2	0	0
Saris for girls 3	1	14	0
	54	1	0

Annual expenditure of Rs 54-1-0 $\div$ 12 = expenditure per month, Rs 4-8-0. Total monthly expenditure Rs 20-4-0 + Rs 4-8-0 = Rs 24-12-0.

Some items have not been included in the above budget estimate, though they are important. These we shall now consider.

1. *Workers' earnings*: A worker's earnings have been calculated at Rs 22/- per month but the worker cannot always earn that amount. He cannot work all the twelve months of the year as the work is hard. Further, incapacity, illness and unemployment intervene, so that on an average he works only for 11 months in a year. His income should, therefore, be really calculated at Rs 20/- per month.

2. *Interest*: Most of the workers are deep in debt. They have to pay heavy interest. The amount of this interest is not included in the above estimate.

It is not possible to give a full idea of the pathetic plight to which a needy worker is reduced when he is in the claws of a *savkar* or a Pathan. But I give here a notable example. There is an old Muslim worker named Zagdu Shekhu residing in Jugaldas Chawl outside the Prem Gate. His wife Fatima had a sewing machine, and she used to supplement her husband's income by working on it. Due to want of money they had to mortgage the machine and take a loan. The machine was worth Rs 80/- but a *bania* named Maganlal Dalsukh gave only seven rupees on it and the rate of interest was fixed at two annas per rupee. But that woman has not been able to pay either principal or interest; and Maganbhai has calculated her debt to be Rs 26/- even before a year is

over. In short, the woman can hardly get back her machine. Many such examples can be cited to show that the condition of workers who are in debt is extremely pitiable. Organized efforts should be made to redeem them from their miserable condition. We have to request you to draw the attention of the mill-owners to this matter and urge them to take proper steps to deal with it.

3. *Medical aid* : Workers have to spend money on child-birth and illness. Sometimes in cases of accidents in mills too, they have to bear the expenses. These items also are not included in the above estimate.

4. *Marriages and deaths* : Expenses incidental to marriage, betrothal, death, alms-giving and dinners on festive occasions, gifts to relatives or castemen at marriage, etc. have also not been included in the above estimate.

5. *Insurance* : Besides these expenses every worker should insure his life for and against accidents in his own as well as his family's interests. It should be made possible for him to pay the annual premium for his insurance.

6. *Education* : Workers should educate their children. Some do send their children to schools but their number is meagre. This expense also is not included in the above estimate.

Even if we make no allowance for these extra items, expenses of a small family for the month of July amount to Rs 24/- per month, whereas its income is only Rs 22/-. Therefore even before the rise in prices it is obvious that it did not get enough for its maintenance.

But such small families are comparatively very few among the working class. As already said, the families generally consist of six or seven persons. It is necessary to examine the expenses of such a family.

Worker in the Weaving Dept: a two-loom Muslim weaver Family: 6 persons—1 man, 2 women (1 old woman), 3 children. Earner—1 man.

Monthly Expenditure

	Rs.	as.	ps.
Rice $1\frac{1}{2}$ maunds.	4	0	0
Pulses $\frac{3}{4}$ maund	1	12	0
Wheat 3 maunds	6	12	0
Mutton 4 lb.	0	8	0
Fuel 6 maunds	1	14	0
Vegetable at $1\frac{1}{2}$ as. a day	2	12	0
Oil & condiments	1	4	0
Ghee, gur, sugar (occasionally)	1	8	0
Tea & milk	2	0	0
Hair oil	0	6	0
Soap	0	4	0
Shaving	0	8	0
<i>Pan, bidi</i>	2	0	0
Rent	2	0	0
Kerosene	0	6	0
Clothes etc.	6	0	0
Total	33	14	0

Before the Plague Bonus (the bonus being 50 to 70 per cent increased the earnings of the worker from Rs 22 to Rs 33 to 37) the worker even when drudging for twelve hours, did not earn sufficient to enable him to maintain his family. Consequently he had to resort to borrowing from shopkeepers and *savkars*.

Now let us examine the worker's present expenditure. Before doing so, however, we may note the increase in the prices of his requirements.

Prices of Food Stuffs

July 1917			20th April 1918		Percentage of increase in price
		Seers		Seers	
Wheat	1 0 0	18		10	80
Bajri	1 0 0	20		10	100
Rice	1 0 0	15		10	50
Pulses	1 0 0	17		15	13
Mutton	0 2 0	1	0 3 0	1	50
Fuel	0 5 0	1 Md.	0 8 0	1 md.	60
Oil	0 3 6	1	0 4 0	1	14
Gur	0 2 0	1	0 2 0	1	—
Ghee	1 0 0	1 $\frac{3}{8}$		1 $\frac{1}{4}$	10
Sugar	0 3 0	1	0 3 0	1	—
Milk	0 1 3	1	0 1 6	1	12
Salt	0 0 6	1	0 1 0	1	100
Castor					
oil	0 3 3	1	0 4 0	1	23
Kerosene	0 1 9	1 Bottle	0 4 0	1 Bottle	100

Cloth Prices

	July				April			Percentage of increase in price
Long Cloth								
(For pants)	0	5	0	per yard	0	8	0	60
<i>Mulmul</i>	0	5	0	„	0	7	0	40
Shirting	0	4	0	„	0	6	0	50
Underwear	0	5	0	each	0	6	0	20
Cap	0	2	6	„	0	5	0	100
Turban	1	5	0	„	1	12	0	40
Umbrella	1	2	0	„	1	8	0	33
<i>Saris</i>	1	0	0	„	1	8	0	50
<i>Cohna</i>	0	12	0	„	1	4	0	66
Printed Cloth (for skirts)	0	6	0	„	0	9	0	50
<i>Nansukh</i>	3	8	0	Per piece	5	0	0	42
<i>Chintz</i>	0	6	0	per yard	0	10	0	67
<i>Jafar</i>	0	4	0	„	0	6	0	33
<i>Odhani</i>	0	10	0	„	1	0	0	60
<i>Chintz</i>	0	12	0	„	1	0	0	33

With such enhanced prices the expenditure for a family of four and six persons respectively will be as follows :—

Expenditure for a family of 4 Persons

Monthly Expenditure				Annual Expenditure			
	Rs.	as.	ps.		Rs.	as.	ps.
Rice 1 maund	4	0	0	Pants 4	5	8	0
Pulses $\frac{1}{2}$ maund	1	5	0	Coats 3	5	4	0
Wheat 2 maunds	8	0	0	<i>Paherans</i> 4	4	4	0
Mutton 4 Ib.	0	12	0	Shirts 2	2	8	0
Fuel 4 maunds	2	0	0	Turban 1	1	12	0
	16	1	0	Boots 4 pairs	12	0	0
Vegetable (at 1 anna per day)	1	14	0	Umbrella 1	1	8	0
Oil and condiments	1	0	0	Cap 1	0	5	0
<i>Ghee</i> , <i>gur</i> & sugar	1	0	0	Trousers 4	3	0	0
Tea	2	0	0	<i>Paherans</i> 4	3	12	0
Milk	0	0	0	Coats 2	3	0	0
Hair oil	0	3	0	<i>Cohnas</i> 3	3	12	0
Soap	0	4	0	<i>Peshwaj</i> 1	6	0	0
Shaving	0	6	0	<i>Ijars</i> 4	5	0	0
<i>Pan</i> , <i>bidi</i>	1	8	0	<i>Kudtas</i> 4	6	0	0
Rent	2	0	0	<i>Chappals</i>	0	8	0
Lighting	0	12	0	Bangles	2	0	0
	27	0	0	<i>Odhanis</i> 3	3	0	0
					69	1	0

69-1-0

$$\frac{69-1-0}{12} = 5 \text{ } 12 \text{ } 1 \text{ monthly}$$

Total in Monthly expenditure

Rs 27 0 0 + 5 12 1 = 32 12 1

Expenditure for a family of six persons

Rice $1\frac{1}{2}$ maunds	6	0	0	<i>Ghee, gur, sugar</i>	1	8	0
Pulses $\frac{1}{2}$ maund	2	0	0	Tea	2	0	0
Wheat 3 maunds	12	0	0	Hair oil	0	6	0
Mutton 4 Ib.	0	12	0	Shaving	0	8	0
Fuel 6 maunds	3	0	0	Rent	2	0	0
	23	12	0		39	15	0
Vegetable (at $1\frac{1}{2}$ as. a day)	2	13	0				
Soap	0	4	0	Monthly			
<i>Pan, bidi</i>	2	0	0	Expenditure on			
Lighting	0	12	0	Clothes etc.	7	0	0
Condiment	2	12	0	Total monthly			
Oil	1	4	0	expenditure	46	15	0

It means that expenditure for four persons would be Rs 32/-, and for six, 47/-. To meet this expenditure workers should obtain at least a minimum increase of 50 per cent and a maximum of 100 per cent on July wages.

(2) How Much Increase Can the Mills Give?

It has now to be considered whether the mills can afford to give this increase needed by the workers. Workers must not ask for such wages as will not leave the necessary margin for the Industry which gives them employment. But in the present circumstances a demand for 50 per cent increase does not at all appear to be excessive. This will be clear from the following facts.

In the month of July the price of yarn was twelve annas per pound and weaving charges about six

annas per pound. Thus the cost of production of a pound of cloth was Re 1-2-0. The market price of that cloth was Rs 1-5-0 per lb. So mills had a profit of 3 as. per lb. and calculating 10 lb. of yarn per loom their profit on two looms was Rs 3-12-0. At that time operatives got a 50 to 70 per cent increase due to plague. Calculating that increase on Rs 22/- per month, it amounts to six annas per day. Thus even after paying six annas more to the worker there remained a profit of Rs 3-6-0.

This condition not only continues for the mills but it has improved considerably. At present yarn price is Re 1-4-0 per lb. and weaving charges are about 8 as. Thus the production cost of a pound of cloth is Re 1-12-0, while the market price is Rs 2-4-0. Mills have, therefore, a margin of 8 as. per lb. And calculating the production of cloth per loom at 10 lb. per day the margin would be Rs 10/- per pair of looms. Hence if during plague mills could afford to give 6 as. increase from a profit of Rs 3-12-0, it should not be difficult for them to pay the worker 6 annas from a margin of Rs 10/-.

The present condition of mills is very good, as is proved by the change in the basis for charging agents' commission, made by some mill agents. On the old basis agents got 3 pies per lb. Instead of that they now take $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent commission. On calculation it is found that the commission they receive now is four times the former amount. If we take 16 lb. as the average production on a loom, at the old rate an agent would get a commission of four annas ; while on the basis of $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent they would get about a rupee, the commission being chargeable on Rs 28/-, the cost of production of 16 lb. of cloth at Re 1-12-0 per lb.

Had the mills not been making extraordinary profits, agents would not have claimed so much commission, and share-holders would not have assented.

We have already pointed out that workers need a minimum increase of 50 per cent due to high prices. Since mills earn at present Rs 10/- per loom, it is not difficult for them to give this increase.

A question may then be raised as to why Gandhiji considered only 35 per cent as just. The answer to that is that there was a condition in the first reference to arbitration that Ahmedabad weavers should not get more than Bombay weavers. On enquiry, the following figures were supplied by four different mills in Bombay regarding the monthly earnings of their weavers.

- (1) Rs 32 3 0 to 34 8 0
- (2) Rs 30 (There was a strike for four days)
- (3) Rs 30 to 44
- (4) Rs 42

Taking the lowest figure of Rs 30/-, a 40 per cent increase would be considered just and proper. But in order that mills may not have to bear too great a burden, the demand was fixed at only 35 per cent. I can say with conviction that from the point of justice not even 1 per cent can be reduced from that.

I am forwarding this statement to Gandhiji so that he may add to it, if he thinks it necessary to do so.

SHANKERLAL GHELABHAI BANKER

APPENDIX B

STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE MILLOWNERS

We have read the statement on behalf of workers presented under Mr Banker's signature.

We beg to state that all the information in Mr Banker's statement dealing with matters other than those in respect of which Prof. Dhruva's advice has been sought is irrelevant and therefore should not be considered. We are surprised that Mr Banker should have made such an effort. We believe his motive in doing so is to mislead the Arbitrator. Such a device is unjust and against the law. Regarding items on which advice has to be sought in this case, we give our replies to points made in Mr Banker's statement.

(A) (1) The points mentioned by Mr Banker are based on false assumptions. He assumes that mills are run out of love for humanity and as a matter of philanthropy, that their aim is to raise the condition of the workers to the same level as that of the employers. We beg to say that his approach in this respect is wrong. In reality mills are privately owned, and are run with no other motive than to make profit. Workers are employed with this aim in view, and therefore employment of labour and conditions of employment are determined purely on the basis of supply and demand and from the point of view of their efficiency. This is as it should be. We

take leave to say that this is the practice all the world over. According to our information nowhere is the relation of employers and workers regulated on the basis suggested by Mr Banker in his statement. There is apparent wisdom that it is not so regulated. Mr Banker's approach is impossible, unachievable, visionary and utopian. It is not practical for this world, for our country or for this city.

(2) Again his statement is based on hopelessly erroneous logic.

1. Increase in Agent's Commission

Everybody knows that managers and agents of mills in Ahmedabad get a prescribed commission. According to one method it is at the rate of 3 pies per lb. of finished products. This method is in vogue in many mills. According to another method commission is paid at the rate of 3 to 4 per cent on sales. Really speaking both these methods worked well formerly. There was a very slight difference in commissions calculated according to the two methods. In recent years the amount of the commission received was the same under both the methods. But after the commencement of the war, when it became necessary to produce fine cloth and prices rose, agent's commission on poundage produced began to decrease, and consequently share-holders began to get more profit. Agents, therefore, stood to lose. The other scale of charging commission was, therefore, adopted. Yet it is in the hands of shareholders to enhance or lower the rate of agents' commission, since by doing so their own profit is affected. This matter is not relevant in the present case.

2. Regarding the necessity of providing schools, dispensaries, night clubs, insurance etc. for workers

All these amenities are good but it has to be seen whether it is possible to put them into practical effect. Even the rich and the middle classes do not get these amenities, and as for mill workers, they are total strangers to them. Again in regard to such matters it is municipalities and Governments alone that can do anything. To introduce such questions into the present dispute is therefore both unjust and unreal. If such amenities are organized no one will welcome them more than we and we shall gladly contribute towards money required for the purpose.

3. The Plague Bonus

This bonus was given as a special case for the period of the plague only. Now that the plague has disappeared it has to be withdrawn. To insist on its continuation as a dearness allowance is improper.

4. Comparison with Bombay Workers and Wages

In the comparison made by Mr Banker the following items have not been considered and therefore his comparison is altogether faulty :

(1) All expenses, including house rent, are more in Bombay.

(2) Bombay workers are cleverer and more efficient.

(3) Due to this Bombay mills can produce more fancy and artistically woven cloth.

(4) Bombay workers generally work in the same mill and do not shift from mill to mill as the Ahmedabad workers do.

(5) A worker in Bombay is not paid wages if he leaves without notice or permission.

Without considering such major differences a

comparison between the two is likely to be erroneous and unjust. Even in progressive Bombay there are no night-clubs or insurance funds. Again in the above comparison attention has not been paid to the wage increases given by Government and Railway Companies to their employees.

(B) In the remaining portion of Mr Banker's statement, an effort has been made to strengthen his plea on the ground that sympathy should be shown towards workers. Here also his facts are unwarranted.

(a) It is not true that in an ordinary worker's family there are a man, his wife and three or four children. After careful enquiry we have come to the conclusion that in an ordinary worker's family there is only one child besides the parents, and very rarely two children.

(b) Nor is it true that the man alone maintains the whole family. In many places boys also work. There are many boys employed in mills. In some places even women work. So the earnings of a worker's family is much larger than that shown by Mr Banker.

(c) The monthly expenditure of workers is shown very much higher by Mr Banker than is actually the case.

(d) Mr Banker's statement that the workers have to toil beyond their capacity is quite wrong.

On visiting any mill, you will find many workers loitering about and wasting their time in the smoking room and water-room as well as in the mill compound. It is our opinion that if they concentrated on their work they would earn much more than they do now. Mills also lose by the workers' slackness.

Production is less and looms and spindles have to be closed many times. It is desirable that this habit of idling is stopped. We have often tried to check this evil, but have failed. Workers will earn much more and their condition will improve by their attending more carefully to their work than by statements made by their friends or by sympathy shown to them. Mills also would make immense profit. It would thus be of benefit both to mills and to workers. It would be well if in this matter our workers would imitate the Bombay workers.

(e) Another thing to be noted is that Ahmedabad workers often change service. The army of substitutes in the mills proves that Ahmedabad mill hands do not remain stationary. They thus bring loss both to us and to the mills.

(f) We respectfully request you to refer to the statement of production prepared by the Calico mills. It clearly shows that the earnings of the mills have not increased considerably inspite of giving plague bonus and increase in wages. On the contrary the increase is slight. As a result of giving opportunities to workers to earn more, production has fallen, and hence instead of any advantage to us it has resulted in much loss. Another thing that the statement shows is that workers could have secured the increase they demand now and even more if they had only availed themselves of the opportunities given to them to work. Our opinion is that workers are content with a certain income and certain facilities, and except on occasions like Mahorum and other holidays they do not take advantage of the opportunity they get to earn more. Our firm conviction after seeing the habits of Ahmedabad workers is that their monthly earnings

do not increase much by giving them higher wages. It is our suggestion that in this respect it is imperative to improve the workers' habits.

(2) Very few points in Mr Banker's statement remain now for special consideration. It is necessary of course to improve the condition of the whole Indian population including the working classes. We agree with Mr Banker in this. We also admit that it should be accomplished as soon as possible. But men and customs do not improve as rapidly as Mr Banker wishes. Utopia cannot be created within a day, a year or a generation. The increase asked for by Mr Banker can be secured by workers if they work more regularly and are less idle. The remedy is in their own hands. They cannot get that increase permanently, out of mere pity. But they can earn more by their own industry and fitness. In this connection we seek permission to say that if Mr Banker and his friends utilize their enthusiasm and energy in improving the habits of the workers they will do immense good to them.

(3) We draw the attention of the Arbitrator to the fact that any increase that he may award should apply only for the duration of the present situation. Prices today are no doubt high owing to the War ; but with good years and termination of the War they are sure to come down, and with that the profits which mills are now making will also diminish. It is highly probable that with higher taxes and keen competition with Lancashire renewed after the War the mills will be placed in a difficult position. It is futile to think at present of the effects these two causes may have on the mill industry ; but it is useful to bear in mind that profit in the future cannot be

expected to be the same at present. In the best years of the Bengal Partition, i.e. from 1900 to 1909, mills made very good profit ; but the industry had to pass through a critical period from 1909 till the beginning of the War. Some mills had actually gone into liquidation during that period. We, therefore, hope that friends of capital and labour will think carefully about all these facts.

(c) It has now to be considered what increase should be given to the workers. They demand 35 per cent. We have been able to give 20 per cent increase. We beg to state that in the circumstances mentioned above and after carefully taking into consideration the near future, the increase we have given is quite just. As a matter of fact it is more than what should be given, but we have thought it proper to give it having regard to the present critical period. Had there been no plague in Ahmedabad, workers, we believe, would have been satisfied with this increase. At present there is no plague in Ahmedabad. So it is no use arguing for an increase on the basis of the plague bonus. If only workers become industrious and give up their habit of constantly shifting from one employee to another, they can secure at least as much increase as they now demand. We shall be very glad to give them more wages, if they work more. Their own industry will benefit them and us more than all the advantages their friends can obtain for them.

In conclusion we seek permission to say that the increase we have proposed is in accord with justice.

GORDHANDAS I. PATEL

PESTANSHA N. VAKIL

Jt. Hon. Secretaries,

Mill Agents' Group

APPENDIX C

THE ARBITRATOR'S DECISION

A dispute occurred last winter between the group of Ahmedabad millowners and the weavers regarding rates of wages, and this had led to a regrettable condition of strike and lock-out. The dispute was referred to me by both parties as arbitrator on 20th March 1918, after which date arbitration proceedings commenced.

I asked both parties to state their case in writing. Due to inevitable difficulties I did not get the statement from the millowners' group for three months. I did not deem it proper to give a decision based only on one party's statement. I, therefore, informed them that they should terminate my arbitratorship and I would be glad to give my help as friend of both the parties if they agreed to come to an understanding by mutual discussion. But both the parties stated that it was not possible for them to do so, and they were unanimous in extending the time-limit given to me as arbitrator. I therefore continued the arbitration proceedings.

On 28th June I received the millowners' statement. Some important questions arose out of this and I asked both parties to give explanations. Upto 3rd July nothing in writing was received from the workers' side. The explanations and facts which I wanted had mainly to be supplied by the millowners. They submitted some facts which they wanted to be treated as confidential. But these did not satisfy all my queries, nor were their explanations satisfactory.

They said that it was not possible to collect all the data asked for.

Under these circumstances, I cannot come to a decision regarding a *really just* solution of the dispute. But it being desirable that the workmen should get the arbitrator's award without further delay, I have had to arrive at *practical justice*. I find the basis for it in the fact that the matter, has of its own accord solved itself as between workers and employers, without waiting for the arbitrator's award. From facts obtained from the parties I find that in the majority of mills 35 per cent increase is already being given and in some cases as much as 50 per cent. I, therefore, consider it proper to give a 35 per cent increase for the remaining period of the dispute, and declare by virtue of the authority invested in me as arbitrator that millowners should give workers a 35 per cent increase for the remaining period of the dispute, i.e. they should pay the difference of $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent in addition to the $27\frac{1}{2}$ per cent now being paid.

In conclusion, I note with satisfaction that both parties have acted peacefully and with mutual tolerance, and have continued to work smoothly in the mills while the award, which was delayed by mutual consent, was still pending. I hope that they will continue to work together peacefully.

10-8-1918

ANANDSHANKER BAPUBHAI DHURVA

APPENDIX D

GANDHIJI'S EXPLANATION REGARDING THE STRUGGLE AND HIS FAST

I feel that I should offer an explanation to the public about my recent fast. Some friends consider this step of mine as foolish, others consider it unmanly, others still consider it even worse. But I believe that had I not taken this step I would have been false to my Maker and to the work undertaken by me.

About a month ago when I had been to Bombay, I was told that if the bonus paid to workers in Ahmedabad mills during the plague was discontinued it was likely that they would strike work and create mischief. I was requested to intervene and I agreed to do so.

Since last August workers were paid about 70 per cent (on wages) as bonus owing to the plague. The attempt to stop that bonus created dissatisfaction among them. Millowners at the last moment agreed to increase their wages by 20 per cent on account of high prices. But workers were not satisfied with this. The dispute was referred to arbitration and Mr Chatfield, the Collector of Ahmedabad, was appointed as umpire. In spite of this workers in some mills struck work. When this happened, the employers backed out of arbitration and declared a lock-out. They also decided to continue the lock-out till out of exhaustion workers were reduced to a state of accepting the 20 per cent increase.

Shri Shankerlal Banker, Shri Vallabhbhai Patel and I were appointed on the Arbitration Board from the worker's side. We saw that if prompt and decisive action was not taken workers would be forced to surrender and be humiliated. So we began enquiring into the question of wage increase. We attempted to secure the employers' help but they did not give us any. They were all the while contemplating using their organized strength to disrupt the workers' unity. Consequently in a sense, our enquiry was one-sided. Nevertheless we made an effort to understand the millowners' side, and came to the conclusion that a 35 per cent increase would be just. We communicated the result of our enquiry to the millowners before informing the workers and told them that if any mistake in our reckoning was pointed out to us, we were prepared to rectify it. But evidently they did not desire any consultation with us. They replied that the increase given by the Bombay employers and the Government was much less than the rate fixed by us. I felt that this was a new matter which they had introduced into the dispute and in a large meeting I declared that workers would accept a 35 per cent increase.

It has to be noted that workers were paid 70 per cent rise on wages on account of plague and they had declared that since prices were rising higher they would not accept anything lower than a 50 per cent increase. As against this we told them to accept a mean between their 50 per cent and the 20 per cent offered by the millowners. (That a mean, viz. 35 per cent was fixed upon for acceptance was merely an accident).

The meeting after some remonstrance agreed to accept 35 per cent increase, and it was also agreed that the moment employers were prepared to refer the dispute to arbitration, workers would also willingly do so. Thereafter, every day thousands of workers collected under the shade of a tree outside the city. Some of them came walking great distances and reiterated their solemn resolve on oath not to accept anything less than 35 per cent.

The workers were not given any financial aid. So some of them suffered starvation. No one would lend them money so long as they were unemployed. On the other hand we their advisers felt that if the able-bodied among them were not ready to earn their bread by manual labour and we collected a public fund to feed them, we would demoralize them. It was very difficult to get those, who were used to working on looms, to lift bricks or baskets of sand. They did such work but unwillingly.

The millowners also made their hearts hard. They resolved not to pay more than 20 per cent, and appointed agents to induce workers to return to work. From the beginning of the lock-out we refused to help those who would not do some work or other to earn a livelihood. But at the same time we assured them that we would not feed or clothe ourselves before we had fed and clothed them.

22 days passed in this manner. The effect of starvation and of the employers' propaganda began to be felt. Devilish ideas hissed in the workers' ears, and whispered that there was nothing like God in the world, who could help them; and that oaths were devices resorted to by the weak. Till lately, daily five to ten thousand men collected at the meetings, with

enthusiasm and zest. Their firmness was visible on their faces. Instead of that one day I saw only two thousand men ; their faces were fallen. At about this very time we heard that workers of a particular chawl deliberately kept away from the meeting and were on the point of accepting the 20 per cent increase. They were reported to have complained, and, in my opinion, quite rightly, that we had motor cars, and plenty of food, and it was easy for us to tell others to attend the meetings and to remain firm till death.

What should I do under these circumstances ? I felt their criticism was just. I have immovable faith in God, just as if He were actually visible. And I believe that it is necessary to keep an oath at any cost. I knew that the men who were seated in front of me also feared God, but that an unbearable burden had come upon them when the lock-out and strike were prolonged. I had travelled much in India. During my travels I had seen hundreds of men who took an oath at one moment only to break it the next. I had also realized that even the best among us have a weak and wavering faith in God and soul-force. I felt that that was a sacred moment for me. My faith was being tested, and I stood up without hesitation and declared that breach of an oath solemnly taken by the workers was unbearable to me. I, therefore, took an oath that I would not take food so long as they did not get a 35 per cent increase, or did not give up the fight altogether.

Hitherto this meeting was not as enthusiastic as the former meetings, it was actually dull. But now those present were enthused as if by magic. Tears trickled down their cheeks, and one by one they stood up and said that they would never go back to the

mills till their demand was fully satisfied, that they would find out those who were absent from the meeting and strengthen their minds. It was a unique experience to witness the power of truth and love. Each began to feel that just as in ancient times God's protective power surrounded us.

I do not repent having taken the oath. On the other hand, it is my conviction that had I behaved in any other manner I would have betrayed the cause I had espoused. I knew before I took the oath that there were some big blemishes in it. It would, for instance, have been unjust to millowners if I took such an oath to influence their decision. I knew that with some of them I was fortunate enough to enjoy friendship, and that I would render myself unfit for it by such an act. I also knew that there was danger of my fast being thus misunderstood. But it was not possible for me to stop my fast from having any effect on the millowners. My responsibility had increased by my contact with them. I seemed incapable of securing even that much relief for workers which would generally in such struggles be considered just. I also knew that I would have to be satisfied merely with the minimum that I could get from the employers, and that too in merely literal conformity with the workers' oath rather than in fulfilment of its real spirit, as it has indeed actually happened. I put all these blemishes implied in my oath on one side of the scales and its virtues on the other, and weighed them. After all there are very few actions of human beings which are completely free from faults. I knew that my oath had many defects. But of two alternatives, viz. (1) that ten thousand men should all of a sudden abandon an oath

taken before God and reiterated solemnly for 20 days consecutively, or (2) that I should be criticized for causing embarrassment to employers in an unfair manner, I preferred the latter. It is my firm conviction that so long as people are not as hard as steel, and so long as the world does not consider men's oaths as unbreakable and immovable as the laws of the Medes and the Persians, they cannot be a nation. Friends may differ from me, but I feel convinced that if in future such an occasion arises, I would not hesitate to act in the same way as I have done in the present case.

I wish to mention two names before I close this letter. India has reason to be proud of them. Shri Ambalal Sarabhai was the representative of the millowners. He is a worthy gentleman, well educated, clever and resolute. His sister Shrimati Anasuyabehn was the representative of the mill workers. Her heart is as pure as gold and she is very kind to the poor. Mill workers adore her, and her word is law to them. I have never heard of a struggle where bitterness hardly existed, and where there was so much courtesy on both sides. This sweet result has been chiefly due to the influence of Shri Ambalal and Shrimati Anasuyabehn.

BY GANDHIJI

UNTO THIS LAST : A Paraphrase

A translation by V. G. D. of Gandhiji's Gujarati summary of Ruskin's *Unto This Last* published originally in the *Indian Opinion*. Describing the "magic spell" of the book in his *Autobiography*, Gandhiji says, "I could not get any sleep at night. I determined to change my life in accordance with the ideals of the book. . . . I translated it later into Gujarati, entitling it *Sarvodaya*" (*the good of all*, not the greatest good of the greatest number).

Gandhiji has added to the paraphrase a small chapter, "Conclusion on Indian Swaraj."

(*Will be shortly out*)

